
BEHOLD,
THE BRIDEGROOM—

By GEORGE KELLY



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THE SHOW-OFF — A PLAY

THE FLATTERING WORD AND
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BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM —

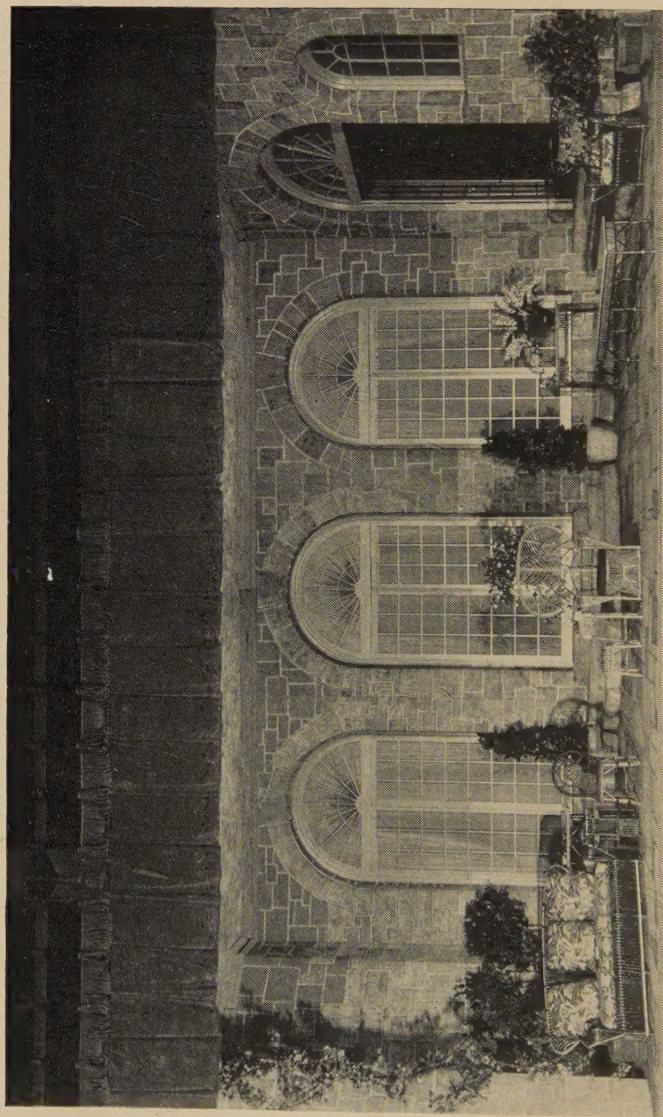


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ACT I. BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM —

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BY
GEORGE KELLY



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1928

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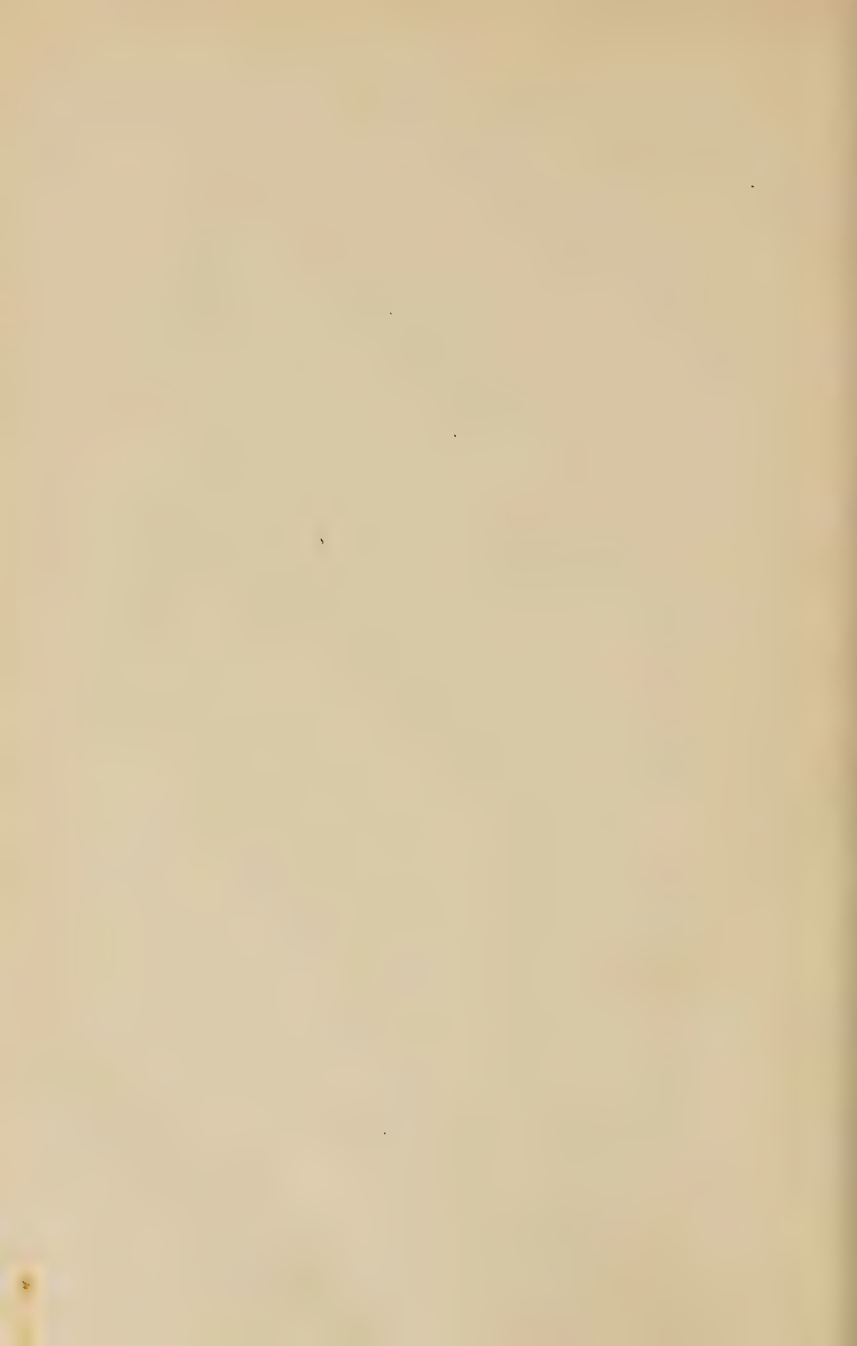
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TO
MY MOTHER



“My lamp was not trimmed and burning when the cry was raised; and so I mustn’t whine if I am not permitted to go in — to the marriage supper.”

TONY LYLE

Behold, *The Bridegroom* —, by George Kelly, was presented by Rosalie Stewart at the Cort Theatre, New York City, on the night of Monday, December 26, 1927, with the following cast :

ANTOINETTE LYLE	<i>Judith Anderson</i>
EDWARDS	<i>Kenneth Lawton</i>
MARY McGRATH	<i>Virginia Russell</i>
SHEPPARD	<i>Mary Gildea</i>
MRS. ELEANOR RIDGWAY	<i>Mary Servoss</i>
SPENCER TRAIN	<i>John Marston</i>
CONSTANCE PEYTON	<i>Jean Dixon</i>
GEHRING FITLER	<i>Lester Vail</i>
ROBERT LYLE	<i>Thurston Hall</i>
DR. HUNTINGTON	<i>Carl Hamilton</i>
DR. LOEBELL	<i>Clarence Bellair</i>
NURSE	<i>Marion Evensen</i>

Play staged by the Author

SCENE: At Shadow Brook, the estate of Robert Lyle, just beyond the city line.

ACT I

A kind of lounge conservatory, outside the drawing-room — about six o'clock in the evening, on a Tuesday in early June.

ACT II

Same as Act I, about four weeks later, in the afternoon.

ACT III

The library at Shadow Brook — in the late afternoon, around the middle of September.

BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM —

ACT I

Miss Lyle is sitting, slouched, on a luxurious divan down at the right, reading a novel. Her dress is a rather daring Paris creation in scarlet velvet that shows every line of her lovely figure. And her slippers and stockings are honey-colored. She is wearing a necklace of twenty fine gold chains caught with clasps of jade, and the bracelet on her right arm and her two rings are of jade. The bracelet on her left arm is three inches wide and is set solidly with alternating rows of diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and rubies. Personally, Miss Lyle is the color of her dress, bold and bizarre — a hussy of the high world. After a moment she raises her eyes, thinks narrowly, and tosses the book aside: then leans over and takes a cigarette from a box at the upper end of the divan, lights it, and settles back among the cushions, looking thoughtfully at the floor. Edwards, the butler, passes the double door up at the left. Miss Lyle gets up, moves across to the left, turns and comes back to the right again. Just as she is turning to continue her pacing, Edwards repasses the left door.

MISS LYLE

Edwards —

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss.

[He appears in the doorway.]

MISS LYLE

Get some cigarettes for that box there.

EDWARDS

I doubt if there are any cigarettes in the house, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE (*turning at the left*)

There are some in one of my trunks upstairs; tell my maid to give them to you.

EDWARDS

Will she understand me, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE (*with a note of irritation*)

She'll understand that — just say cigarettes.

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss.

[He disappears. And Miss Lyle comes to a stop over near the divan, where she stands looking straight ahead thoughtfully. A telephone bell rings, somewhere off at the left. Mary McGrath, the housekeeper, and a kind of privileged servant, crosses the conservatory from the right. She pauses up at the left to pick up a few leaves that have fallen from the bouquet on the small table, then goes on out at the left door. The voice of Sheppard can be indistinctly heard answering the telephone. And Miss Lyle moves up and across at the back towards the left door, listening, casually.]

SHEPPARD

Yes? — Yes. — Why, I'm very sorry, Miss Lyle is in Europe. — Well, just one moment, if you please. (*There is a pause, during which Miss Lyle watches the door; and then Sheppard appears, and speaks in a rather subdued tone*) Miss Peyton wants to speak to you on the telephone, Miss. I told her you were in Europe, but

she said to tell you she wanted to speak to you anyway,
— that she knew you were home.

MISS LYLE

How the devil did she know —

SHEPPARD

I'm sure I don't know, Miss; but she said she did.

MISS LYLE (*turning to the telephone on the table against the back wall*)

Hang up the telephone out there, Sheppard; I'll talk to her here.

SHEPPARD (*retiring*)

Yes, Miss.

MISS LYLE (*into the telephone*)

Hello! — How the devil did you know I was back? — How did *she* know? — Well, it's a long story, darling, I can't tell you over the telephone. — I know, I know; but I changed my mind. I'll tell you all about it when I see you. — Where are you now? — All right, come ahead. (*She hangs up, and Edwards enters at the left door carrying a foreign-looking box of cigarettes. He passes in front of Miss Lyle, going over to fill the box on the stand at the head of the divan*) Did you get them, Edwards?

[*She strolls forward at the left.*]

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss; she understood me.

MISS LYLE (*looking straight out*)

Throw that box away when you've emptied it, Edwards; don't take it back to *her*.

EDWARDS (*filling the box*)

Very good, Miss.

MISS LYLE

She has a perfect mania for saving empty boxes. My trunks are absolutely littered with every old box that anything ever came in.

EDWARDS (*politely amused*)

I think perhaps that was what she was saying to me, but I didn't understand her.

MISS LYLE (*speaking authoritatively, and moving towards the divan*)

Well, you tell her I told you to throw it away if she says anything to you about it.

EDWARDS (*starting for the left door again, and taking the empty box with him*)

Very good, Miss.

MISS LYLE (*sinking onto the divan*)

Are there matches there, Edwards?

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss, I just brought some in.

MISS LYLE

All right. What time is it?

[*He consults his watch.*]

EDWARDS

Just ten minutes past six, Miss.

MISS LYLE

I'm in to Miss Peyton, Edwards; she'll be here in a few minutes.

EDWARDS

Very good, Miss. (*He goes up the three steps to the left door, then turns to her again suddenly*) Oh, did you know that Mrs. Ridgway was out here, Miss Lyle?

[*She looks at him.*]

MISS LYLE

Mrs. Ridgway!

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss ; Matthews sez he saw her come through the gate about a half-hour ago. He sez she was in a motor car, with a gentleman.

MISS LYLE

Well, where *is* she ? if he saw her come through the gate a half-hour ago.

EDWARDS

I'm sure I couldn't say, Miss : unless they may have went out again by the back road. He sez the motor went down towards the rose gardens.

MISS LYLE

You haven't seen her at all, have you ?

EDWARDS

No, Miss, I haven't ; she hasn't been to the door at all to *my* knowledge.

MISS LYLE (*turning away*)

Matthews probably imagines he saw her.

EDWARDS

He sez she spoke to him, as she came through the gate.

MISS LYLE (*turning to him impatiently and raising her voice*)

What would she be doing out here when she doesn't know I'm home !

EDWARDS

I'm sure I couldn't say, Miss ; but he sez he saw her.

MISS LYLE (*turning away again*)

He's crazy.

EDWARDS

Would you like me to ask him anything further about it, Miss ?

MISS LYLE

No — it isn't important.

EDWARDS (*turning to go*)

Very good, Miss.

MISS LYLE (*talking to herself*)

Matthews is always seeing something. (*Edwards stops to hear what she has to say, but she is apparently unaware of his presence*) I wish to God he were as good at seeing things when he's driving that car of mine. (*Edwards disappears*) But, I'll tell you what you can do, Edwards—

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss.

[*He reappears.*]

MISS LYLE (*looking at him*)

Get my father's office on the telephone out there, and tell them I'd like to speak to his private secretary.
[*She turns away.*]

EDWARDS

I imagine they've all gone by this time, Miss Lyle; it's nearly a quarter—

MISS LYLE (*interrupting him, impatiently*)

Well, call the number and see;—

EDWARDS (*withdrawing, obsequiously*)

Very good, Miss.

[*She settles back upon the cushions.*]

MISS LYLE

Then you won't have to imagine.

EDWARDS (*on the telephone, out at the left*)

Franklin, two, one hundred. (*A gold-colored lamp is turned on in the drawing-room at the back, and Mary McGrath can be dimly seen crossing towards the right*)

Very well.

[*Miss Lyle gets up impatiently and goes up to a small table*]

at the head of the divan to get something out of her vanity case. Edwards appears in the left door.

MISS LYLE

No answer?

EDWARDS

No, Miss, — I suppose they've all gone.

MISS LYLE

All right.

[Edwards withdraws. A doorbell rings out at the left; and Edwards appears again.]

EDWARDS

Mrs. Ridgway is at the door, now, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

All right, tell her I'm out here.

EDWARDS

Very good, Miss.

[He withdraws. Miss Lyle puts her cigarette on the edge of a tray, opens her vanity case, and powders her nose and chin.]

MRS. RIDGWAY (*out at the left*)

Hello, Edwards.

EDWARDS

How do you do, Mrs. Ridgway.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm sight-seeing out here with a friend of mine, and I'd like to telephone.

EDWARDS

Yes, Ma'am.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I suppose it's here in the same place, isn't it, Edwards?

EDWARDS

Yes, Ma'am, right there to your left.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Thanks so much.

EDWARDS

Did you know that Miss Lyle was back, Mrs. Ridgway?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Miss Lyle!

EDWARDS

Yes, Ma'am, she got here yesterday afternoon.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Edwards, it isn't possible!

EDWARDS

It *was* a bit of a surprise.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And where is she?

MISS LYLE (*calling*)

Here I am out here, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY.

Antoinette!

EDWARDS

She's out there in the lounge, she told me to tell you.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*appearing at the door*)

Tony! —

MISS LYLE (*moving forward and towards the left*)

Hello, Eleanor darling.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*rushing down the steps towards her*)

It can't be possible.

MISS LYLE

How are you, dear —

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, aren't you the wretch, — (*kisses her*)

MRS. RIDGWAY AND MISS LYLE (*speaking together*)

Mrs. Ridgway: To suddenly appear this way, and not let a soul know you were coming home.

Miss Lyle: What on earth are you doing out *here*, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I simply *cannot* believe my *eyes*.

MISS LYLE (*turning to a cigarette box on a small table at the right of the center chair*)

Sit down, dear, and have a cigarette.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning to the bench at the left*)

Well, I certainly need to, after this shock.

MISS LYLE (*bringing her the box of cigarettes and a packet of matches*)

Who and *where* is the handsome stranger that you were seen coming through the gate with a half-hour ago?

MRS. RIDGWAY (*taking a cigarette from the case in her bag*)

No, thanks, dear, I have my own. (*Miss Lyle tosses the packet of matches into her lap and returns to the table with the cigarette box*) It's my husband's boss, my dear, — Mr.

Train; a perfectly gorgeous person. And I've been promising him for the past three months to bring him out here to see the gardens. He's interested in landscape gardening and that sort of thing. He's still down there looking at the rose gardens. I came up to telephone.

[*She lights her cigarette, and Miss Lyle wanders back to the divan.*]

MISS LYLE

It's a bit early for roses yet, isn't it?

MRS. RIDGWAY

There was one white one out, — Mr. Train has it in his coat. I insisted that he take it.

MISS LYLE (*sinking into the divan*)

I've just gotten through calling Edwards and Matthews and everybody on the place liars because they said they'd seen you coming through the gate.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes, I spoke to Matthews.

MISS LYLE

But, I couldn't imagine where you could be, if they saw you a half-hour ago.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, of course, I didn't *dream* you were at home; so, of course, I didn't bother coming up to the house — I simply wanted to show Mr. Train the gardens.

MISS LYLE

Why didn't your husband show them to him?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Now, don't start; (*Miss Lyle laughs faintly*) he's perfectly safe. Safer than he would be with you.

MISS LYLE

Well, you said he was a gorgeous person.

MRS. RIDGWAY

So he is. And I'm a contented wife.

MISS LYLE

How *is* your noble husband?

MRS. RIDGWAY

He's very sweet, (*Miss Lyle laughs again*) so don't start on him, either. This bench is as hard as the devil; I don't know why you have such a thing here.

MISS LYLE

Why don't you move?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Because I want to sit where I can see *you*. And you look perfectly dreadful.

MISS LYLE

Do you like this dress?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think it's horrible.

MISS LYLE

Too short?

MRS. RIDGWAY

My dear, I can see everybody belonging to you. Pull it down.

MRS. RIDGWAY AND MISS LYLE (*together*)

Mrs. Ridgway: Where did you get it, Paris?

Miss Lyle: (*wriggling in her dress*) It's that damned stuff that pulls up every move you make. Yes.

MRS. RIDGWAY

It looks it.

MISS LYLE

If you only draw your breath it's up around your neck.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, why haven't you let me know that you were back, Tony?

MISS LYLE

I only got back last night.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, you could have telephoned me.

MISS LYLE

I didn't want anybody to know that I *was* back.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Why not?

MISS LYLE

Because I'm not going to stay here.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Where are you going?

MISS LYLE

I don't know where I'm going.

MRS. RIDGWAY

There aren't many more places left for you *to* go.

MISS LYLE

Well, I can't hang around here, talking to myself.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Is your father still away?

MISS LYLE

He's in South America.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Somebody told me they saw him at Palm Beach.

MISS LYLE

He's in the Argentine, now; I had a cable from him before I left Europe. So I thought I'd just stay here for a few days and then go down to White Sulphur, — and see Connie Peyton.

MRS. RIDGWAY

She's back from White Sulphur.

MISS LYLE

I know she is; she telephoned me a few minutes ago. She's over at Marcella Travers'.

MRS. RIDGWAY

How did she know you were back?

MISS LYLE

She said Marcella said that Lennie Rooks had told her he'd seen me in a taxi.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yesterday?

MISS LYLE

It must have been. And, of course, the *world* will know it now, within twenty-four hours, with Connie Peyton knowing it. She's on her way over here, now.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*rising, and crossing to the table at the right of the center chair to deposit some cigarette ashes*)

Well now, hold on to that divan, my dear, for I have a bit of news that will simply *lay* you to rest on the hill-side.

MISS LYLE

What is it?

MRS. RIDGWAY (*moving nearer to her*)

She's going to be married.

MISS LYLE

Who is?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Miss Peyton is; unless the authorities prevent it.

MISS LYLE

You mean Connie Peyton, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well now, who else are we talking about, my dear?

MISS LYLE

But, you're surely not serious, darling.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I am telling you the truth, my dear; she's to be married on the twentieth of next month; for I have it on good authority.

MISS LYLE

I don't believe it.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well now, you wait and see.

MISS LYLE

I wouldn't believe it if I saw it, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Why not, my dear?

MISS LYLE

Because it isn't possible, Eleanor —

MISS LYLE AND MRS. RIDGWAY (*together*)

Miss Lyle: I mean, it just isn't.

Mrs. Ridgway: My God, she's been fooling around with that brain specialist ever since you went away.

MISS LYLE

You mean Ogden?

MRS. RIDGWAY

That's the party, my dear.

MISS LYLE (*sinking back among the cushions*)

Oh, my God!

MRS. RIDGWAY (*laughing*)

The man with the funny eyebrows.

MISS LYLE

Ring for Edwards immediately, —

MRS. RIDGWAY

Isn't that simply *devastating*!

MISS LYLE

And tell him to bring me something very strong and very sustaining.

MRS. RIDGWAY

It started right after you went away.

MISS LYLE

Don't tell me any more, Eleanor, I can't bear it.

MRS. RIDGWAY

She went to him about her nerves, and *evidently* he helped her. And two weeks ago he went down to White Sulphur to see her, and she came back with him in *two* days, and she *was* to have stayed there a month.

[She turns away and starts back towards the bench.]

MISS LYLE

Well, of course, I shall do everything in my power to prevent it.

[Mrs. Ridgway becomes conscious of the cigarette in her hand and comes back to the ash tray to get rid of it.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

You're too late, darling.

MISS LYLE

I positively will, Eleanor, even if I have to stand up in the church and demand that it be stopped.

MRS. RIDGWAY

It's not going to be a church wedding.

MISS LYLE

Well, I'll stand up wherever it is. *(Mrs. Ridgway laughs and turns towards the bench again, removing her coat)* No, really, I'm serious, dear. Because, I mean, it wouldn't be fair, — to the unborn. *(Mrs. Ridgway dies)* I mean, it just wouldn't.

[Mrs. Ridgway picks up her pocketbook from the bench and moves back towards the center chair.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

It's love, my darling —

MISS LYLE

It's inactivity, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Love, the great leveller.

MISS LYLE

She simply had nothing to do and she got nervous.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, that's probably what love is, dear, — just nervousness.

MISS LYLE

Mon Dieu!

MRS. RIDGWAY (*tossing her pocketbook onto the chair*)

I know it made me frightfully nervous. (*Turning suddenly and starting towards the door up at the left*) I must telephone my house.

MISS LYLE

That dreadful man.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning and coming back*)

Oh, they say he's very brilliant, my dear.

MISS LYLE

My God, what good will that do *her*! — she won't know what he's talking about.

[*Mrs. Ridgway laughs and leans on the left corner of the center chair.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

He'll have the fascination of mystery for her, dear.

MISS LYLE

You know as well as I do, Eleanor, that Connie Peyton hasn't a brain in her head.

MRS. RIDGWAY

She won't need it, darling, he's a brain specialist; he'll have enough for both.

MISS LYLE

Well, of course, it'll never last.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*moving forward from the chair, and drifting towards Miss Lyle*)

Well, certainly not; I don't think she'd do it if she thought it would.

MISS LYLE

Who told *you* about it?

MRS. RIDGWAY

My dear, at least a dozen people have told me.

MISS LYLE

She hasn't said anything about it herself, has she?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, not a word, my dear, — leave it to her. She's always very dumb, you know, about her own business.

MISS LYLE

Well, I'll get it out of her.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, now listen, Tony, — don't say anything about it to her when she comes here to-day, or she'll swear I told you —

MISS LYLE

Don't be alarmed, my dear, —

MRS. RIDGWAY

For she has a suspicion that I know it.

MISS LYLE

I'm stricken mute.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And since she wouldn't tell me herself, I just wouldn't please her to let her think that I was sufficiently interested even to discuss it. (*She turns away towards the back and starts across towards the left door*) Have you the time, Tony?

MISS LYLE

No, I haven't, dear, I'm sorry. Push that button there and ask Edwards.

[Mrs. Ridgway turns at the steps and goes to a push-button at the back.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

I must fly this minute.

MISS LYLE

What are you rushing away for?

MRS. RIDGWAY *(hurrying up the steps to the left door again)*

My dear, I must telephone my house; there's to be a message there for me at six o'clock.

MISS LYLE *(calling after her)*

Well, where are you going?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I want to use the telephone out here.

MISS LYLE

Why don't you use this one here?

[She indicates the telephone on the table up at the left.]

MRS. RIDGWAY *(turning and hurrying back to it)*

Oh, — I never noticed it. Fenton said he'd telephone the house at six whether or not he'd be home for dinner.

[She takes off the receiver.]

MISS LYLE

Why don't you stay out here for dinner?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Impossible, Tony.

[Edwards appears in the left door.]

MISS LYLE

I mean if Fenton isn't coming home.

MRS. RIDGWAY *(into the telephone)*

Brightwood, six, four, two, four.

MISS LYLE

What time is it, Edwards?

[Edwards looks at his watch.]

MRS. RIDGWAY *(into the telephone)*

Please. *(To Miss Lyle)* I've asked Mr. Train to my house.

MISS LYLE

What does it matter about a man, my dear. He doesn't care where he eats — as long as he eats. What time, Edwards?

EDWARDS

Just six-twenty, Miss.

MISS LYLE

Thanks.

[Edwards withdraws.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, Lord! *(She hangs up)* And the line is busy.

MISS LYLE

That's probably Fenton calling your house, now.

MRS. RIDGWAY *(coming forward to the chair and picking up her purse)*

Very likely. And poor Mr. Train is probably going mad.

MISS LYLE

Why don't you let me send down to the gardens for Mr. Train?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Now, what's the sense of that, Antoinette? — I really can't stay a minute.

MISS LYLE

You have to wait for your call, dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, the line'll be clear in a minute. And I really *must* get back to town by seven o'clock.

[She sits in the center chair.]

MISS LYLE

I'm curious to see Mr. Train.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, you can see him some other time.

MISS LYLE

Is he the man that Effie was telling me about, — that she met at your house?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes, she met him at dinner there one night. Didn't she say she liked him?

MISS LYLE

She raved about him, as I remember.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, he *is* charming, Tony, really.

MISS LYLE

How old is he?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I should say about thirty-two or thirty-three, — somewhere in along there.

MISS LYLE

Is he married?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Certainly not. Do you think I'd be trailing around with him if he were?

MISS LYLE

What does it matter, my dear?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, it probably wouldn't to you, but it does to me.

(*Miss Lyle laughs*) It's Fenton that asks him to the house all the time; he admires him enormously.

MISS LYLE

Is he really Fenton's boss down there?

MRS. RIDGWAY

My dear, he's *everybody's* boss. Lansing's been abroad, you know, for nearly a year; and he's practically had entire charge down there. And Fenton says he's a positive wizard. And he's entirely self-educated, you know, — at least, as far as that business is concerned; for he came in there first simply as Mr. Lansing's secretary. Of course, he's worked like a dog.

MISS LYLE

He should give some lessons to a few men friends of mine.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Have you heard anything from Gehring lately?

[*Miss Lyle laughs faintly.*]

MISS LYLE

A propos of idle young men.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Where is he?

MISS LYLE

I don't know where he is.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Now, stop telling lies, Tony.

MISS LYLE

I'm not telling lies at all.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You know perfectly well where he is.

MISS LYLE

I swear to God I don't. I had one letter from him at Biarritz, and I haven't heard a word from him since.

MRS. RIDGWAY

He probably doesn't know where you are.

MISS LYLE

Oh, I'll hear from him, sooner or later; he always manages to locate me.

MRS. RIDGWAY

When are you going to marry him, Tony?

MISS LYLE

Now, how should *I* know *when* I'm going to marry him, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I think it's time you *did* know *something* about it, dear; you've been stringing the man along for nearly three years.

MISS LYLE

Well, — I think a girl should be naturally a bit hesitant about becoming the wife of a drunkard.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I think that's largely your fault, Tony. (*Miss Lyle makes a sound of amusement*) Yes, I do.

MISS LYLE

I expected you'd say that.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Because I think it's true.

MISS LYLE

Now, why do you say such a thing, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Because he never drank till he met you. (*Miss Lyle shrieks*) No, he didn't.

MISS LYLE

That's delicious.

MRS. RIDGWAY

For I've known him for years.

MISS LYLE

And I suppose I taught him to drink?

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, but I think you've unsettled his life, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Oh, rot, Eleanor.

[She turns away.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I think you have, nevertheless. — He's perfectly mad about you, and has been from the first day he met you.

MISS LYLE

Well, I don't think my marrying him would resettle his life.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I think it *would*, Antoinette; I think that's just what's the matter with him. He's wandering around from post to pillar, drinking his head off, just to try to get you off his mind. — And I think it might settle *your* life a bit, too, Tony, as well as his.

MISS LYLE (*rising and going up to the stand for another cigarette*)

Now, please don't start to lecture me, Eleanor, —

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm not lecturing you at all.

MISS LYLE

I've just come back from Europe to avoid that.

MRS. RIDGWAY

But Gehring Fitler is a friend of mine, — and a very charming boy. And all you've done for the past three

years is sit back and ridicule his sincere regard, — just as you've ridiculed everybody else that was ever fond of you. — And that's rather a horrid thing to do, Antoinette, — *I think*. But Gehring is so *desperately* fond of you that his feeling has survived even that.

MISS LYLE (*sauntering across at the back towards the left door*)
Has he sent you here to plead his cause?

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, he hasn't done anything of the kind; I haven't seen him since the Horse Show. — But, *I do* think you've given him a rather shabby deal. — And so do a great many other people; for everybody in the world knows that he's asked you to marry him at least a dozen times.

MISS LYLE (*coming forward at the left, and looking straight out*)

I think that's something of a habit with him, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, if it is, I don't think it's a habit that your ridicule will cure.

MISS LYLE (*turning upon her*)

I've never ridiculed Gehring Fidler in my life.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You've made him *look* ridiculous a thousand times.

MISS LYLE

Because I wouldn't marry him?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Exactly.

MISS LYLE

And, must I marry a man simply because he asks me?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, what good reason have you, Tony, for *not* marrying him?

MISS LYLE (*with a gesture of annoyance*)

Because I don't *want* to marry him.

[*She moves across in front of Mrs. Ridgway to the divan again. And there is a pause.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

He's quite as eligible as anybody we know. — And *certainly* you'll marry somebody sometime.

MISS LYLE (*sinking into the divan*)

Sometimes I think I won't.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, every girl says that, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

Some women don't.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*rising*)

Well, you're not the kind that won't, you can take that from me.

[*She circles down and towards the left, to the bench.*]

MISS LYLE

I might surprise you, darling.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Maybe you will; but I don't think so. (*She drops her pocketbook onto the bench with a deliberate movement; then comes back a few steps towards the center chair and stands, looking steadily at Miss Lyle*) But, whatever you do, Tony, I *don't* think that what you're doing *now* is at all fair — to anybody. And to your father, particularly, Antoinette, — to be perfectly frank.

[*There is a slight pause; then Miss Lyle turns and looks at her questioningly.*]

MISS LYLE

How do you mean, to my father?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think your father would like to marry again.

MISS LYLE (*deprecatingly*)

Oh, now, Eleanor —

MRS. RIDGWAY (*continuing to the center chair*)

Why not? — I don't think he's fifty yet.

MISS LYLE

But, I thought you were talking seriously, dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

So I am. And I've talked very seriously to your father, too, several times, — along the very same line. And my impression has always been that the only reason he hasn't married before this was because of a sentimental feeling about putting a stepmother over *you*. But, I think if you were to marry to-morrow, it wouldn't be very long before your father would do the same thing.

MISS LYLE

Well, I don't think there's anybody in the world that would be more vastly amused at that remark than Daddy himself.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Maybe so, dear; but that is my impression. (*She rests her elbow on the back of the center chair and speaks directly at Miss Lyle, in a level tone*) I think he's simply waiting for *you* to marry; and as there's no good reason why you don't, — I dare say he's quite as mystified by your conduct as everybody else is.

MISS LYLE (*with an attempt at amusement*)

Well, *you* shouldn't be mystified, darling — with *your* intuition.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And I'm *not* mystified, either, dear, — (*Miss Lyle laughs,*

banteringly) not the least little bit; for I know *exactly* why you don't marry.

MISS LYLE

How psychic you are.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Never mind, I'm psychic enough for that. (*Miss Lyle laughs again, tantalizingly*) Although if I were to tell you, I suppose you'd be quite as much amused as you are at what I've just told you about your father.

MISS LYLE

But, I should *adore* being amused, *chérie*, for once in my life; so please tell me.

[*She settles herself against the cushions and looks whimsically at Mrs. Ridgway. And Mrs. Ridgway holds her eye for a slight pause, as though preparing her speech.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

It's because you're so profoundly romantic, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

Oh, I said *amused*, Eleanor, not bored.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And you're waiting for the kind of love experience that you think will satisfy you. But I think you're waiting in vain, dear, for even if it were to come, I think you'd find you weren't ready for the occasion — by any means. [*Miss Lyle holds her eye for a second.*]

MISS LYLE

You know, I think you're just a little bit rough on me, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*drifting away from the chair and moving towards her*)

No, — I'm not at all, Antoinette; I'm simply telling you what I honestly believe. (*She stops a few paces*

from her and looks at her narrowly) I think I know you just a little bit better than anybody else; and I'd like to see you happy. Because, to be perfectly frank, dear, I think life is beginning to play out with you. You've *been* everywhere, you've *seen* everything, and you've *had* everything. And it isn't enough, — for *your particular* kind of nature.

MISS LYLE

So you think I should get married.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think *you* should, yes.

MISS LYLE

Even though I don't love the man.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Everybody isn't capable of love, Tony. It's a thing one's got to be prepared for. And I don't think *you* have been. [*Miss Lyle is amused, and faintly embarrassed.*]

MISS LYLE (*raising her arms and letting them fall over the back of the divan*)

Then, you think that for me the heavens are empty, Eleanor, as far as love is concerned?

MRS. RIDGWAY

As far as any knight in armor is concerned, yes, — decidedly. (*Edwards appears in the left door*) That's the reason I think you're foolish to wait for it.

EDWARDS

Mr. Train is at the front door, Mrs. Ridgway.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning and crossing in front of the center chair*)

Thanks, Edwards.

EDWARDS

He told me to tell you he'd brought the car up.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*going up to the telephone at the back, and speaking over her left shoulder to Miss Lyle*)

He's probably gotten tired waiting. (*To Edwards*)
Tell him I'll be out in two minutes.

MISS LYLE

Ask Mr. Train to come in, Edwards.

EDWARDS (*withdrawing*)

Very good, Miss.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Now, I've told you I've got to go in a minute, Tony.

MISS LYLE

You haven't got your call yet.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming forward to the bench for her pocket-book*)

I know you just want me to object, so that you can accuse me; (*Miss Lyle laughs*) but I won't please you.
[*She opens her pocketbook and powders her nose.*]

MISS LYLE

Don't be alarmed, darling, I'll be very nice to him.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, Hell —

MISS LYLE

Why, Eleanor! — How self-conscious you are about him.

MRS. RIDGWAY

He probably won't know you're on the boat.

MISS LYLE

You *almost* make me suspect that you're —

MRS. RIDGWAY (*closing her pocketbook, and moving towards Miss Lyle*)

Now, stop being obvious, Tony, and tell me before Mr. Train comes in why you came back so soon; for I *know* something must have happened.

MISS LYLE

Now, *don't* get me started on *that*, my dear, —

MRS. RIDGWAY

What happened?

MISS LYLE

Well, you may have *heard* of hell cats in your life, but you've never really *met* one till you meet that woman that I went abroad with.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Mrs. Farnsworth?

MISS LYLE

There's only one.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*sitting on the divan above her, eagerly*)

What did she do?

MISS LYLE

She came from Toledo — for one thing — which should have been enough for me, — if I'd had any brains.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Her daughter was with you, too, wasn't she?

MISS LYLE

A dirty little sneak, my dear; for I found out afterwards that she'd told her mother everything that I'd ever told her.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Did you have words with them?

MISS LYLE

A perfect brawl, my dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I should love to have been there.

MISS LYLE

She even told me to lower my voice, — that I was *not* at home.

MRS. RIDGWAY

She didn't, really, Tony?

MISS LYLE

Upon my soul, Eleanor, those were her *very* words. So then *I* just *chiseled* a few remarks, -- and let her have them, right then and there. Why, my dear, it got so that I couldn't say my soul was my own. So I just left the place in ashes, -- and went up to Paris. (*Edwards appears in the left door*) I suppose she's cabled Father by this time.

EDWARDS

Mr. Train.

[*Mrs. Ridgway rises.*]

MISS LYLE

I called up his office a while ago to find out if there were any cables there, but they'd --

[*Mr. Train appears.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY (*moving across towards the left*)

I'm terribly sorry, Spencer, but I found my cousin home, and we've been talking our heads off here.

[*He comes down the steps and forward at the left, smiling. Edwards withdraws.*]

TRAIN (*stopping at a point at the right of Mrs. Ridgway*)

That's quite all right. I brought the car up to the front of the house, and then it occurred to me that you might possibly go back down there again.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*moving across in front of him towards Miss Lyle*)

Thanks, so much; I probably should have. I want to introduce Mr. Train, Antoinette. My cousin, Miss Lyle.

[*Train bows, rather ceremoniously.*]

MISS LYLE (*extending her arm and hand towards him*)

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!

[*Mrs. Ridgway and Train laugh; and he crosses to take Miss Lyle's hand. Mrs. Ridgway drifts towards the left.*]

TRAIN

How do you do, Miss Lyle.

MRS. RIDGWAY

He does look rather like a bridegroom, doesn't he?

MISS LYLE (*shaking hands with him*)

All but the nervousness. How do you do, Mr. Train.

Do you like our gardens?

TRAIN

Yes, they're very beautiful indeed.

MISS LYLE

Do sit down, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

Thanks.

[*He moves back to the center chair.*]

MISS LYLE

Why don't you sit down for a minute, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY (*going up towards the left door*)

I must telephone this minute. I'll use this one out here. You can talk to Mr. Train. Excuse me, won't you?

TRAIN

Certainly.

[*He turns and sits down in the center chair; and looks at Miss Lyle.*]

MISS LYLE

I've been trying to persuade Mrs. Ridgway to stay out here for dinner, Mr. Train, but she says she's asked you to *her* house.

TRAIN

Yes, she has.

MISS LYLE

But I told her I didn't think you'd mind very much where you dined as long as you dined.

[He laughs.]

TRAIN

No, —

MISS LYLE

Would you?

TRAIN

I'm not very particular.

MISS LYLE

Men are usually very agreeable about that sort of thing.

TRAIN

But, I understood she was expecting Mr. Ridgway home for dinner this evening.

MISS LYLE

Well, she'll know in a minute. And if he isn't coming, I think I can persuade her to stay out here, — if *you* won't object.

TRAIN

Not at all; I should like to very much.

MISS LYLE

You'll be doing an act of charity, really, if you will; for otherwise I shall dine in solitary grandeur. There isn't a soul out here, you know; my father's away.

TRAIN

This is rather a big place to be alone in.

MISS LYLE

It's much too big, *I* think; I don't know why Daddy

keeps it up. He's away a great deal of the time; and I'm scarcely ever here.

TRAIN (*getting up and moving forward, looking straight out*)
That's too bad; it's a very beautiful place.

MISS LYLE (*observing him narrowly*)

Yes, the gardens are pretty; — I don't know much about the rest of it. But, I think you're a bit early to see the rose gardens, really.

TRAIN (*turning to her*)

Yes, I think they *are* a bit late this year. This was the only one that was out.

MISS LYLE

Oh, really?

TRAIN

I suppose we should have left it; —

MISS LYLE

Not at all, —

TRAIN

But —

MISS LYLE

Why should you?

TRAIN

Mrs. Ridgway insisted that I wear it.

MISS LYLE

Well, I'm very glad she did; it looks very well on you.

TRAIN

A bit fancy, don't you think?

MISS LYLE (*smiling*)

I should say daring — (*He breaks into a little laugh*)
with those clothes you're wearing.

TRAIN

Why?

MISS LYLE

Why, — I think you're in very grave danger of being captured and lead directly to the altar.

TRAIN (*laughing*)

No, I'm hardly so alluring as that.

MISS LYLE

Well, this is the month for that kind of thing, you know.

TRAIN (*taking the flower from his coat as he moves closer to her*)

Wouldn't you like to have this rose, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE

No, really, Mr. Train, I much prefer that you should have it.

TRAIN (*offering her the flower*)

It's the first rose of summer, you know. (*She laughs faintly*) And blooming quite as much alone as the last one.

MISS LYLE

That's the reason I think you should keep it.

TRAIN

But I'm sure it'll look much better on you than it does on me. (*She looks up into his eyes and smiles*) Do take it, — please.

MISS LYLE (*taking the flower*)

Is it good luck or something?

TRAIN

It should be.

[*She makes a faint sound of amusement.*]

MISS LYLE

Thanks so much.

TRAIN

Don't mention it. (*He turns away, and, taking a cigarette from his case, strolls towards the left; and Miss Lyle,*

sliding her right arm out to full length across the lower arm of the divan, looks meditatively at the flower) I hope I haven't broken it, taking it off.

MISS LYLE (*abstractedly*)

No, it's quite perfect.

TRAIN (*turning and coming back to the little table at the right of the center chair to dispose of the burnt match*)

It is rather a perfect rose, isn't it?

MISS LYLE

Too perfect, for this world, I'm afraid, Mr. Train. I suppose that's the reason they don't survive.

TRAIN

A great many people don't care for white roses.

MISS LYLE

I don't myself, particularly; there's something rather deathly about them. So I think I'll press this.

[*She reaches for the book beside her.*]

TRAIN

In the book, you mean?

MISS LYLE

Yes; my mother used to do that all the time.

TRAIN

Really?

MISS LYLE

Yes; there's an enormous book of hers upstairs, and it's quite filled with pressed flowers.

[*She settles the rose in the book.*]

TRAIN

How long has your mother been dead, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE

She died the year I was born. And I'm twenty-seven,
— (*she looks at him*) if you won't tell anybody.

TRAIN (*seriously*)

I won't tell anybody. (*She bursts out laughing; and he laughs; and crosses to her*) Let me take that, Miss Lyle, I'll press it here on this table.

[*She hands him the book and he steps up to the table at the head of the divan.*]

MISS LYLE

If you can find room there.

TRAIN

I can make room.

MISS LYLE

Just push those things aside, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

There's plenty of room here.

[*He puts his weight on the book, and she sits looking at him. And there is a pause.*]

MISS LYLE

It seems rather unfair to press the life out of that poor flower that way, doesn't it?

TRAIN

They keep their color better if they're pressed when they're in full bloom.

[*He continues to press; and there is another pause.*]

MISS LYLE

Mrs. Ridgway tells me that you are her husband's boss, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

No, I'm just looking after things till Mr. Lansing gets back.

MISS LYLE

Are you very severe in your executive capacity?

TRAIN

I don't think so, particularly.

MISS LYLE

I'm afraid you are.

TRAIN

Why so?

MISS LYLE

The way you're pressing that flower.

[He stops and laughs.]

TRAIN

This is rather out of my line, Miss Lyle. I'm afraid it doesn't give a very accurate idea of my business personality.

[They laugh a little.]

MISS LYLE

Are there any *women* in your department?

TRAIN

Only seven hundred and twelve.

MISS LYLE

Oh, my dear! And are you their boss, too?

TRAIN

For the moment I am, yes.

MISS LYLE

I suppose they're frightened to death of you, aren't they? *(He laughs again)* I'm sure they must be.

TRAIN

I don't think so. I don't *see* the majority of them very often, as a matter of fact.

MISS LYLE

They probably run when they see you coming.

TRAIN *(laughing, picking up the book, and coming forward to return it to her)*

Why, I'm not such a formidable person as that, Miss Lyle, surely.

MISS LYLE

I imagine you *could* be *very* formidable, if you wanted to be.

TRAIN (*handing her back the book*)

You're not afraid of me, are you?

MISS LYLE (*taking the book*)

You're not my boss. (*They laugh*) Thanks.

TRAIN (*moving away towards the left*)

I don't think you'd find me very difficult, Miss Lyle, even if I were.

MISS LYLE

You know, I think this is rather an appropriate book to press this flower in.

TRAIN (*turning*)

What is it?

MISS LYLE

Oh, I'm sure you've never heard of it. I picked it up in Paris on my way home a week ago; and it's quite mad. But, there's something in it about a man having given a woman some kind of a strange flower the first time he met her.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*entering at the left*)

My husband has deserted me, children; he says he'll not be home.

MISS LYLE (*rising triumphantly*)

The fates are against you, darling.

[*She moves up and across at the back to the left to push the button.*]

TRAIN

I suppose they couldn't get through out there.

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, he says it looks as though they'll be there till midnight.

MISS LYLE

And *I* have taken advantage of your absence to persuade Mr. Train to stay out here for dinner.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*moving up to her*)

Now, I've *told* you, Antoinette, that I've already asked Mr. Train to *my* house for dinner.

MISS LYLE (*coming forward at the left*)

I know, I know, — he told me that, too; but I appealed to his sense of chivalry. (*She smiles at Train, then turns to Mrs. Ridgway, who has come forward to the bench at the left*) So please sit down, darling, and don't be difficult, or Mr. Train will think we're fighting over him. (*Train laughs*) Please sit down, Mr. Train.

[*Train turns and sits in the center chair and Mrs. Ridgway sits on the bench. Miss Lyle continues over to the right and up to the cigarettes at the head of the divan.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I'm sure I don't know what he'll think of *me*.

MISS LYLE (*getting herself a cigarette and lighting it*)

He'll think you're a very intelligent person, won't you, Mr. Train? (*Train laughs*) Staying out here where it's nice and cool, and befriending a lone woman. (*Edwards appears in the left door*) There'll be four for dinner, Edwards.

EDWARDS

Very good, Miss.

TRAIN

I think I'm rather fortunate, having *two* invitations for dinner.

MISS LYLE (*calling after Edwards*)

And bring some cocktails, Edwards.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*taking off her hat*)

None for me, Tony, I've reformed. (*Miss Lyle makes a sound of derisive amusement*) The doctor says I mustn't touch alcoholics of any kind.

MISS LYLE

You should change your doctor, darling.

[*She comes forward at the right with the cigarette box.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Mr. Train doesn't drink anything, either.

MISS LYLE (*staggering slightly at the information*)

Oh, my God! Everybody's becoming so *pure* I feel quite depraved.

[*Train and Mrs. Ridgway laugh.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, Connie'll be here in a minute; I'm sure she'll oblige.

MISS LYLE

Yes, I don't think Connie's reformed. Have a cigarette?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Not now, thanks, dear.

MISS LYLE (*returning with the cigarettes*)

You have one, haven't you, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

Yes, thank you, I haven't finished this yet.

MISS LYLE

Has Mr. Train ever met Connie?

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, I don't think you have, have you, Spencer?

TRAIN

No, I don't believe I have.

MISS LYLE

Miss Peyton?

TRAIN

No, I haven't.

MISS LYLE (*coming forward to the divan*)

Well, — she's *quite* mad. She'll probably stay to dinner when she comes; she usually does, whether she's asked or not.

[*She arranges the pillows on the divan.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

We're both terribly dusty, Tony; I'd like to go up to your room before dinner.

MISS LYLE

Well, wait till Connie comes, she ought to be here in a minute.

MRS. RIDGWAY

They're repairing the road below you here, and you have to detour for miles.

MISS LYLE

They are everlastingly repairing that road.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, my dear, I've never seen such dust in my life; you'd positively think you were in Italy.

MISS LYLE (*moving a few steps towards the center of the room*)

Did *you* know that Mr. Train insisted that I take the rose that you so carefully pinned on him? (*Train and Mrs. Ridgway laugh and look at each other*) And I've pressed it in this book for good luck, because he said it was the *first* rose of summer.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I didn't pin it on him at all, did I, Spencer?

TRAIN (*amused*)

No.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I simply handed it to him to pin on himself.

MISS LYLE

Well, whatever you did, darling, he *handed* it to me, while *you* were out of the room.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I suppose you asked him for it, didn't you?

MISS LYLE

No, I didn't, did I, Mr. Train?

TRAIN (*laughing*)

No.

MISS LYLE

I was even reluctant to accept it; but he *forced* it upon me.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I don't believe a word she's saying, Spencer.

MISS LYLE

It's the truth. I was afraid it *might* be the beginning of a very *thrilling* romance.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, you're quite capable of it, darling.

MISS LYLE (*turning away and moving back towards the upper arm of the divan*)

Now, don't deceive the young man, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm not deceiving him at all. She's been trying to persuade everybody for years, Spencer, that she's simply an emotional negative, and I assure you she's the most romantic person I know.

MISS LYLE

Eleanor thinks that because *she* is capable of high romance, Mr. Train, that everybody else is.

[She sits on the arm of the divan and leans back, luxuriously.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, I don't think anything of the kind, now, Tony. And I don't think that what I did had anything high or romantic about it.

MISS LYLE

Don't you think it was rather romantic, Mr. Train, for the daughter of a very rich man to marry a man who had absolutely no money whatever?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I simply fell in love with a man and I married him.

MISS LYLE

What do you think about it, Mr. Train?

[He laughs.]

TRAIN (*between two fires*)

Why, — *I'm* rather inclined to think that it was more romantic of the man than the woman.

MISS LYLE

Of the man?

TRAIN

I mean, if he loved her.

MISS LYLE

But, my dear Mr. Train, the *man* wasn't giving up anything.

TRAIN

It seems to me he was running the risk of having to give *her* up.

MISS LYLE

How do you mean?

TRAIN

By losing her, to her own people again; if he weren't able to provide satisfactorily for her.

MISS LYLE

But, it seems to me that he was *inviting* dissatisfaction on her part, Mr. Train, for his first commandment was — that for the first five years she was to accept absolutely nothing in the way of material assistance from her people.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Which was perfectly right, wasn't it, Spencer?

MISS LYLE

Now, *please* don't agree with her, Mr. Train, (*he laughs again*) for we've argued this thing till we're both black in the face.

TRAIN

Well, really, I don't see how he could have very well done anything else, under the circumstances.

[*Miss Lyle despairs.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Of course he couldn't.

MISS LYLE

Oh, now, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

I mean, after all, a man should want to feel that he is at least capable of being responsible for his wife.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And if his wife is willing to *be* his wife, then she should be willing to live within his income.

MISS LYLE

She'll quote that to me now, Mr. Train, every time we discuss it.

MRS. RIDGWAY

That's been the point of our entire argument, Spencer. She said when I told her I was going to marry Fenton that I was mad; and that it wouldn't last two weeks; and it's lasted two years. And it's going to go on lasting.

MISS LYLE

But, things have improved for you since then, my dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

But, we've improved them, darling. And the last two years have been the most thrilling of my life; for they've not only given me something to do, but they've given me an enormous amount of self-respect. For they've shown me that I *could* deprive myself of practically everything I'd been accustomed to, out of consideration for somebody else.

MISS LYLE

But, why *deprive* oneself of anything.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm not making any virtue of it, Tony; —

MISS LYLE

I mean, unnecessarily.

MRS. RIDGWAY

After all, I wanted to do it. And even if I hadn't, my sense of sportsmanship would have held me to it.

MISS LYLE (*dragging herself up from the arm of the divan*)

Well, — I suppose it's all very noble, (*she moves towards the center of the room, pulling down her dress*) but I'm afraid there isn't much danger of my letting myself in for anything of the kind.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You're just the kind that would, my dear.

MISS LYLE

I don't see the necessity of it, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

It isn't a question of necessity, Tony; it's a question of meeting the *man*. (*Miss Lyle gives a little toot of amusement*) And if you ever *do* meet him, you'll find yourself quite as sacrificial as any other woman.

MISS LYLE

Maybe so, darling; but I think you overestimate my quality.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, *I* don't think I do at all.

[*Miss Lyle looks at Train.*]

MISS LYLE

Joy was never duty to *me*, Mr. Train. (*He looks steadily at her, curiously; and she holds his eye for a dead pause. The smile dies gradually from her face. Slowly she raises her left arm and hand and flicks her fingers at him: then turns away and moves down towards the extreme right*) But you mustn't look at me so disapprovingly.

TRAIN (*without altering his position or expression*)

I'm sorry to give you that impression, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

Unconsciously, perhaps; but there's a rebuke — in your eyes — (*she turns and looks at him, then moves up towards the back of the room*) that with my present state of conscience may induce a moral reform — which would vindicate Eleanor, and I couldn't bear that.

[*She stands looking off to the right.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'll be vindicated, my dear, if I live long enough.

MISS LYLE

Why should you wish to be vindicated, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

For your own happiness, Tony.

MISS LYLE (*raising her right arm with a yearning gesture*)

Ah — but that road to — conscious worth — is so frightfully long and rutty. And after I'd traveled it, I should probably be more dissatisfied than I am now. (*She tilts her head and looks over her left shoulder, rather whimsically, at Train, who is watching her. And he laughs; and looks at Mrs. Ridgway*) Mr. Train is amused.

[*She looks off to the right again.*]

TRAIN

Don't you like to be amusing, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE (*with sudden and bitter fury*)

I hate it — intensely. (*There is a rather astonished pause. Train turns slowly and meets Mrs. Ridgway's eyes; and Miss Lyle comes forward smolderingly at the right*) But I suppose it's the only impression I'm capable of making.

[*She arranges the pillows again, preparatory to sitting down.*]

MISS PEYTON (*appearing in the left door, and holding an empty cocktail glass aloft in her right hand*)

I appear with glass in hand to welcome the prodigal — (*Train rises*) Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't know you had company.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Hello, Connie.

MISS PEYTON (*coming down the steps into the room*)

Hello, Eleanor dear.

MISS LYLE (*sinking into the divan*)

Hello, Connie.

MISS PEYTON (*oblivious of Train, as she comes forward at the left and across in front of him towards Miss Lyle*)

I shouldn't speak to you at all, Tony Lyle, for you've evidently told everybody in the world but me that you were coming home.

MISS LYLE

I haven't told a soul.

[*Edwards comes in at the left with a tray of cocktails.*]

MISS PEYTON (*pointing at Miss Lyle and speaking explosively*) Now, don't lie! — (*she lowers her voice*) and don't get up, for I know you don't want to. How are you, darling? You look a perfect wreck.

[*She leans over and kisses her.*]

MISS LYLE

Don't spill that liquor over me!

MISS PEYTON (*straightening up and shouting back at her*)

There isn't any left in it to spill!

[*She proves the statement by turning the glass upside down and sprinkling it over Miss Lyle*] So don't be so damned fussy.

[*Edwards comes forward at the left, offers Mrs. Ridgway and Train a cocktail, and they both decline: so he turns and crosses at the back and stands at Miss Peyton's left, waiting for her to turn.*]

MISS LYLE

Where did you get it?

MISS PEYTON

I encountered Edwards in the hall, and I declined to

allow him to announce me; I preferred to *burst* upon you, *au naturelle*. (*She laughs and turns away to her left*) And here he is again! — *pandering* to my most fatal weakness. (*Edwards offers her a cocktail*) No, Edwards, you cannot tempt me. Just take this glass, (*she puts the glass on the tray*) and remember me as a woman who prevailed. (*She crosses in front of him towards Mrs. Ridgway; and Edwards offers the cocktails to Miss Lyle. She takes one; and he takes the tray to the table at the head of the divan, then crosses at the back and goes out of the room*) Eleanor darling, I'm having the most perfect run on you these days. Did you ever see anything like it? (*Turning to Miss Lyle*) This is the third time this week that I've run into her.

MRS. RIDGWAY

This is Mr. Train, Connie, — Miss Peyton, Spencer. [*Miss Peyton looks at him, casually, and moves up to him, extending her hand.*]

MISS PEYTON

How do you do, Mr. Train. Aren't you good looking.

TRAIN (*taking her hand*)

How do you do.

MISS PEYTON

I hope you won't come to any hasty conclusions about me, Mr. Train; I've just been having tea — (*she looks at Miss Lyle*) with variations — with a feminine emancipator — (*Train is amused and Mrs. Ridgway laughs*) and I'm afraid she's set me quite free.

[*She gives a little wave of her handkerchief and moves back towards Miss Lyle.*]

MISS LYLE

You staying here to dinner?

MISS PEYTON

My dear, I'll stay anywhere, — but you mustn't ask me to eat a thing; for I'm on a *very* strict diet, — and have been ever since you went away.

MISS LYLE

Sit down, Connie.

MISS PEYTON

I'll sit here near the cocktails; (*she gives Train a wandering smile over the left shoulder, and moves to the little chair at the head of the divan*) save me the bother of moving. (*She sinks into the chair, miscalculates its height, and utters a short screech: then bursts out laughing*) Oh, my dear, — I'm so full of tea I can hardly sit down. (*She laughs again and rocks slowly from side to side. Miss Lyle sits regarding her stonily, and Train resumes the center chair*) I don't wonder the Japanese sit on cushions, — (*to Train*) or whatever it is they sit on. (*She continues to laugh, and Train regards her pleasantly. She unfastens her neckpiece, and, sitting up erect, looks at Miss Lyle, as though finding it difficult to focus her*) Well, Tony darling, I'm surprised to find you sober. (*Mrs. Ridgway bursts out laughing; and so does Miss Peyton*) I really am. I said to Marcella Travers, immediately she told me you were back, I said, "She probably went on a *tear* over there and never came to till she found herself *home*."

[*She laughs again.*]

MISS LYLE (*very coldly*)

I thought you were at White Sulphur.

MISS PEYTON (*flipping her hand at her*)

Now, never mind about *me* — I want to know why they *chased* you out of France; for I know you've

been deported or something, or you'd never have come back at *this* time of year.

MISS LYLE

I went away with the wrong people.

MISS PEYTON (*with a complete change in manner and dropping her voice to a level key*)

My dear, — *anybody* is the wrong people to go away with, — as I have found from *bitter* experience. (*She turns to Train, who is regarding her curiously, and becomes very gracious*) I have been in the West Indies all winter, Mr. Train, with my aunt; (*with another change to level bitterness*) and if ever there was a living *devil* it's that woman. (*Mrs. Ridgway bursts out laughing*) Oh, I'm telling you, my dear, there should be something *done* about these white-haired old *women*; they've been getting away with *murder* for years.

MRS. RIDGWAY

What did she do, Connie?

MISS PEYTON

Why, my dear, the woman is *simply out* of her mind, that's all. She fights with everybody in the hotels; accuses every maid of stealing from her. (*To Miss Lyle*) She's had five since February. (*Then to Train*) And she's gotten the idea *lately* that every bit of paper money she gets is *counterfeit*. (*Train and Mrs. Ridgway laugh*) Did you ever hear of such a thing? It's no wonder I'm the way I am. (*She opens her purse and starts to rummage for her cigarettes*) She wakened me one morning at White Sulphur at *six o'clock*, — to examine some dollar bills that the desk had sent up the night before. Now, I *ask* you — (*she returns to her purse*) as ladies in the rough.

MISS LYLE

Is she still down there?

[Miss Peyton comes upon her powder puff and touches her face a bit.]

MISS PEYTON

Yes, I've got to go back there again next Wednesday.

I had to come up on some business for her.

MISS LYLE

How long are you going to stay down there?

MISS PEYTON

Till she goes to Maine in July. What are *you* going to do, Tony?

MISS LYLE

I haven't decided yet.

MISS PEYTON

My dear, why don't you come back to White Sulphur with me? It's better than poking around here.

MISS LYLE

I may.

MISS PEYTON

Is your father going to open Crestley this summer?

MISS LYLE

I don't know, I haven't heard him say. I don't want to go there, even if he does, — I'm tired of the seashore.

MISS PEYTON

Are you going to stay in town this summer, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I've got to, Connie, — I'm a workingman's wife.

MISS PEYTON

But, you'll surely get a few weeks somewhere.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I don't know yet, Connie, really.

MISS PEYTON

Doesn't Fenton get any vacation?

MRS. RIDGWAY

You'll have to ask Mr. Train about that, Connie; he's Fenton's boss.

MISS PEYTON (*pointing at Train*)

This Mr. Train?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes.

[*Miss Peyton utters a shriek of delighted astonishment.*]

MISS PEYTON

Well, now, isn't that interesting! When you introduced Mr. Train, I remembered vaguely having heard the name somewhere; and I thought I'd probably met you or something. But, now that you say that Mr. Train is Fenton's boss, (*she becomes very mysterious and puts the powder puff back into the pocketbook with excessive precision*) I remember *exactly* who it was that was telling me about him.

MISS LYLE

Who was it?

MISS PEYTON

Never mind, my dear, I'm not giving away any secrets; but it's a very *desperate* case.

MRS. RIDGWAY

What about that, Spencer?

TRAIN

I'm sure I don't know.

MISS PEYTON

No, no — I don't think Mr. Train *does* know, as a matter of fact. She worships from afar.

[*She laughs.*]

MISS LYLE

Who is it, Connie, Effie Myers?

MISS PEYTON

Oh, my God, no! I'm talking about a very attractive girl.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Effie met Mr. Train one night at my house.

MISS PEYTON

Well, I can assure Mr. Train he's quite safe from Effie: she's like Tony here, — she's only interested in the married ones.

[She rummages in her purse again, discreetly.]

MISS LYLE

You're certainly giving me a very nice reputation, Connie, in front of Mr. Train.

MISS PEYTON

Eleanor has probably told him all about you.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I've never told him a thing!

MISS PEYTON

Speaks a lady.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Have I, Spencer?

TRAIN (*smiling*)

No.

MISS PEYTON

Well, whether she has or not, this is a *very* charming girl — that Effie Myers introduced Mr. Train to on the street one day. And *further* than that I *will* not go. What time are you having dinner, Tony? — I'm nearly starved.

MISS LYLE

What time have you?

[Miss Peyton looks at her wrist watch.]

MISS PEYTON

Ten minutes of seven.

MISS LYLE

About seven fifteen. Do you want to go up to my room now, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY *(rising)*

Yes, I *would* like to, dear, I'm horribly dirty.

[She moves towards the left door; and Train rises.]

MISS LYLE

And will you tell Edwards to look after Mr. Train, dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes. You want to come upstairs, don't you, Spencer?

TRAIN *(following her)*

Yes, I'd like to brush up a bit.

MISS LYLE

My maid is up there somewhere, Eleanor, if you want anything.

MRS. RIDGWAY *(going out)*

All right, dear.

TRAIN *(turning as he goes out)*

Excuse me, won't you?

MISS LYLE

Certainly, Mr. Train.

MISS PEYTON *(with extreme graciousness)*

Certainly. *(She turns to the little table behind her for a cocktail)* Isn't he nice. *(Miss Lyle rises and moves across towards the left door. As she passes the little table*

at the right of the center chair, she puts her empty cocktail glass down) I'd never met him before.

MISS LYLE

Do you want to go upstairs before dinner?

[*She continues to the left door and stands looking down the hallway after Train, narrowly.*]

MISS PEYTON (*explosively*)

No! (*She puts the empty glass back on the table*) I don't. (*She takes a cigarette from her purse and gathers herself up, writhing in her clothes*) I want nothing but a cigarette and a comfortable seat here on this divan.

[*She lights her cigarette.*]

MISS LYLE (*without turning*)

There are some in that box there.

MISS PEYTON

I've just had a complete overhauling over at Marcella Travers'. (*She shuffles forward to the divan, removing her hat and pushing her hair up. And Miss Lyle turns away from the door and comes back very quietly to the back of the center chair, where she leans, watching Miss Peyton keenly*) She has an idea that she understands massage; and all you've got to do is mention an ache or a pain, and she pounces on you. And by the time she's finished with you, she's given you so many new pains that you've forgotten the one she started to treat you for. (*She finishes with a giggle, and drops into the divan, uttering a little shriek at the abruptness of the impact*) Oh, dear.

[*There is a pause.*]

MISS LYLE

Who's the woman you said was interested in Mr. Train?

MISS PEYTON

I'll never tell you, my dear ; I said I wouldn't, — and I won't.

MISS LYLE (*crossing behind the center chair towards the little table at the head of the divan*)

I don't believe it was anybody at all.

MISS PEYTON

Oh, you'll never get it out of me that way, darling ; I'm used to that trick.

MISS LYLE

I think you're just making it up.

MISS PEYTON

All right, old dear, have it your own way. (*She picks up the book that Miss Lyle has been reading*) What's this book here?

MISS LYLE (*making a rapid movement*)

Oh, give me that.

[*She snatches the book from her and moves across towards the left, looking to see that the rose has not been displaced.*]

MISS PEYTON (*after an astonished pause*)

My God, I'm not going to eat it.

MISS LYLE (*trying to be casual*)

There's something in it here that I've marked.

[*She continues up to the small table at the left, opens the drawer and puts the book in carefully.*]

MISS PEYTON (*settling back into the divan*)

One of those mad love stories, I suppose, that you're always reading. (*There is a pause*) Tell me, Tony, — is Eleanor interested in Mr. Train?

[*Miss Lyle slams the drawer, turns sharply, and looks at her.*]

MISS LYLE

Certainly not. (*Coming forward at the left*) You know perfectly well she's not interested in him.

MISS PEYTON

How should *I* know it, my dear?

MISS LYLE

Because you know *her*. And you know that she doesn't know there's a man in the world but Fenton Ridgway.

MISS PEYTON

I shouldn't have opened my mouth.

MISS LYLE

Mr. Train is simply a friend of Fenton's.

MISS PEYTON

Well, you know there *are* cases on record, darling, of women who have been interested in their husbands' friends.

MISS LYLE

Well, Eleanor is not that kind of a woman.
[*She sits on the bench, and looks straight out. And there is a pause.*]

MISS PEYTON

How did she know you were back?

MISS LYLE (*curtly*)

She didn't. She simply came out to show Mr. Train the place, and came in to telephone.

MISS PEYTON

Had you ever met him before?

MISS LYLE

No, I hadn't.

MISS PEYTON

I don't think he liked *me*.

MISS LYLE

I don't see how he could have liked either of us very well, the way you were talking.

MISS PEYTON

Why, what'd I say?

MISS LYLE

You said plenty, I assure you.

MISS PEYTON

Well, what were you trying to do, dear, impress him?

MISS LYLE

Well, I was *not* trying to impress him that I was a *fast* woman; and it seemed to me that that was the impression of me that *you* were trying to give him.

MISS PEYTON

Well, tell me what I said.

MISS LYLE

You said that I specialized in married men.

MISS PEYTON

Well, so you do.

[*Miss Lyle holds her eye.*]

MISS LYLE

What married man was I ever interested in?

[*Miss Peyton settles back as though trying to get a better look at her.*]

MISS PEYTON

Now, what are *you* trying to do, Tony, a Madonna of the Bench or something, for *my* benefit?

MISS LYLE

I just want you to tell me one.

MISS PEYTON (*getting angry*)

Well, I could tell you a great many *more* than one;
(*Miss Lyle rises abruptly, and stands taut, glaring at her.*)

And there is a pause. Then Miss Lyle, still keeping her eyes upon her, moves up towards the door to assure herself that nobody is listening) but we'd only fight. — And we both know too much about each other for that. (Miss Peyton sinks back into the divan again, and there is an ominous silence. Suddenly she recovers herself, and, leaning forward, opens the attack) I don't know what's the matter with you to-day; you're on a perfect rampage.

MISS LYLE (*whirling upon her, and coming forward to the center of the room*)

Because I think you should have more sense of the fitness of things than to talk the way you did before a perfectly strange man.

MISS PEYTON (*raising her voice*)

What the devil do I care about perfectly strange men!

MISS LYLE (*with a deft gesture*)

Shhh —

[Miss Peyton is abruptly silenced. And, with a glance at the left door, Miss Lyle moves up and crosses at the back towards the right. She keeps her eyes fixed upon Miss Peyton as she crosses.]

MISS PEYTON (*sinking back*)

I didn't come over here to talk to perfectly strange men;
I came over to talk to you.

MISS LYLE (*picking up a cocktail from the little table*)

Well, I know exactly what you're going to talk about before you begin, —

MISS PEYTON

Well, I supposed you did —

MISS LYLE

So it won't be any news to me.

MISS PEYTON

But I was wondering how you felt about it.

MISS LYLE (*emphatically*)

I haven't the *slightest* interest in it at all.

[*Miss Peyton lifts her hands and drops them with a gesture of finality.*]

MISS PEYTON (*getting up, with difficulty*)

Well, — I probably shouldn't speak to you about it at all, dear, (*she moves towards the little table at the right of the center chair. She's a little uncertain on her right foot, and turns and looks at the floor to determine the cause of the uncertainty: then presses the fire out of her cigarette on the ash tray*) but everybody says she's a very nice woman. (*Miss Lyle sets the empty cocktail glass on the table and looks keenly at her. Miss Peyton turns, leisurely, and meets her eye*) And your father didn't ask Aunt Alice not to say anything about it.

MISS LYLE

What are *you* talking about?

MISS PEYTON

Why, about your father, my dear, — you said you knew.

MISS LYLE

What about him?

MISS PEYTON

About him going to be married. (*Miss Lyle makes a sound of contemptuous amusement, and comes forward at the right*) You surely knew it?

MISS LYLE

Oh, don't be ridiculous, Connie.

MISS PEYTON (*following her a step or two*)

Well, my dear, I'm simply telling you what he

told my aunt himself, at Palm Beach six weeks ago.

[Miss Lyle turns sharply and looks at her.]

MISS LYLE

My father?

MISS PEYTON

So she said.

MISS LYLE

Going to be married?

MISS PEYTON

That's what she told *me*. She said he spent one entire Sunday afternoon there talking to her about it.

MISS LYLE *(turning away towards the divan)*

Your aunt must be getting funny in the head, Connie.

MISS PEYTON

My dear, she *met* the woman twice.

[Miss Lyle turns to her again.]

MISS LYLE

What woman did she meet?

MISS PEYTON

Why, the woman he's going to marry, of course. *(Miss Lyle holds her eye steadily, and there is a slight pause)* Her name is Gibson, — and she's a widow. And Aunt Alice said that, from the way your father talked, he'd known her a long time. And I *saw* your father with her *myself*, several times. And Aunt Alice says she's perfectly charming. *(Miss Lyle turns and sits down on the divan, then looks curiously at Miss Peyton)* She said your father said that he thought he'd marry whenever *you* did; that was how Aunt Alice happened to mention it to me. She wanted to know if there was anything definite between you and Gehring.

[*Miss Lyle looks away and thinks hard for a second; and Miss Peyton watches her narrowly.*]

MISS LYLE (*rising abruptly*)

No, there isn't: (*she moves across towards the left*) so you can rest easily to-night; for I know that's been keeping you awake for the last two years.

[*Miss Peyton makes a sound of amusement.*]

MISS PEYTON (*turning to the divan to gather up her things*)

You flatter yourself, my dear; I'm not at all curious about anything. (*Miss Lyle stands over at the left, thinking*) I'm sorry if I've said too much; but I assumed, of course, that you knew about it; for at least a dozen people have spoken to me about it since I've been back. (*She moves up towards the center chair, settling her bag on her arm and brushing her hat*) And I know Eleanor knows about it.

[*She looks directly at Miss Lyle. Miss Lyle turns sharply and meets her eyes.*]

MISS LYLE

Haven't you anything else to tell me, Connie?

MISS PEYTON

What about, dear?

MISS LYLE

About your *own* marriage. — You seem to be so well informed about other people's.

MISS PEYTON

I don't know what you're talking about.

MISS LYLE

You know damned well what I'm talking about; you're to be married the twentieth of next month in Boston to Doctor Ogden, and Marcella Travers is to

be the bridesmaid. And not one of us was to know anything about it.

[She turns away.]

MISS PEYTON

How do you know you weren't?

MISS LYLE *(turning back)*

Because I know *you*. And I know you didn't have the slightest intention of telling us.

MISS PEYTON

How could I have told you when you were in Europe?

MISS LYLE

Eleanor Ridgway wasn't in Europe; and you haven't said a word to her either. *(Starting across again towards the right)* But you're very voluble about other people's business, and very close-mouthed about your own.

MISS PEYTON *(turning away indifferently towards the back)*

Well, after all, it *is* my own business, darling.

MISS LYLE

Well, it's hardly that now, for the entire city knows all about it. *(She arranges the pillows on the divan to sit down)* And those that *don't*, — I'll make it my business to tell them. *(She sits down. And Train enters at the left)* Did they look after you all right, Mr. Train?

TRAIN *(coming down the steps and forward towards her)*

Very nicely indeed, thank you.

[Miss Peyton turns and moves slowly across towards the left at the back, watching them both suspiciously.]

MISS LYLE

Eleanor hasn't come down yet.

TRAIN

Don't I look bright and shining?

MISS LYLE

I think you both looked quite presentable when you came in.

TRAIN

I felt pretty dusty after that detour.

MISS LYLE

The dinner'll be ready in a minute, I hope you're not too starved.

TRAIN

No, I think I'll survive; I don't usually dine much before this.

MISS LYLE

Do sit down, Mr. Train.

TRAIN (*turning away, towards the center chair*)

Thank you.

[*As he reaches the center chair Miss Peyton is standing over at the left, slightly toward the back, looking bitterly at Miss Lyle. He stops and looks at her; and after a slight pause she becomes suddenly aware of his regard. She starts slightly, and breaks into a foolish little laugh.*]

MISS PEYTON (*moving forward to a point on a line with Train*)

Oh, — a — Didn't Effie Myers tell me you'd been in Russia or some place recently, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

Yes, I was over there last year, for about four months.

MISS PEYTON (*significantly*)

Did you go there by yourself?

[*Miss Lyle turns away, with a movement of annoyance.*]

TRAIN

Yes, it was just a business trip; I went over there for Mr. Lansing.

MISS PEYTON (*smoothly*)

Weren't you terribly afraid to go over there by yourself?
[*Train is amused.*]

TRAIN

There was nothing particularly to be afraid of — that I could see.

MISS PEYTON (*becoming very feminine*)

Oh, my dear, I should be *simply* terrified. Because, I mean, I'm perfectly *certain* that I should be put to death or *something* before I'd ever get back.

TRAIN

I shall probably have to go back there again before long, —

MISS PEYTON (*raising her eyes to Heaven*)

Oh! —

TRAIN

By the looks of things.

MISS PEYTON (*flicking the fingers of her left hand coyly at him, and moving towards the back*)

Well, I shall never go with you, Mr. Train, so don't ask me.

[*She laughs, and he is amused.*]

MISS LYLE

When do you think you'll have to go, Mr. Train?

TRAIN (*turning and moving towards her*)

Why, I imagine about the latter part of this year. I'll have to wait till Mr. Lansing gets back in October before I'll know definitely.

[*Mrs. Ridgway comes in at the left.*]

MISS LYLE

How long do you expect to be gone *this* time?

MISS PEYTON AND TRAIN (*speaking together*)

Miss Peyton: Eleanor darling, how do you ever get your hair to look so nice?

Train: About the same as before, I should say; there's practically the same territory to be gone over.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Now, stop making fun of me, Connie Peyton.

MISS PEYTON AND MISS LYLE (*speaking together*)

Miss Peyton: I'm not making fun of you at all, my dear; but you always look so irritatingly correct when everybody else is a holy show.

[*Edwards appears.*]

Miss Lyle: Do you mind it very much?

TRAIN

Not a great deal. I haven't had any very certain dwelling place in the last few years.

EDWARDS

Dinner is served.

[*He withdraws.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, my dear, I found a perfectly marvelous barber.
— Dinner, Antoinette and Spencer.

MISS LYLE

All right, dear, go right on in.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*starting up the steps*)

My sister-in-law told me about him.

MISS PEYTON (*following her*)

Well, my dear, I've been having the most harrowing time with *my* hair. (*They wander down the hallway out of sight, Train watching them off; while Miss Lyle, who is sitting on her right foot, prepares to get up*) You know, I had it thinned last summer; and ever since I've been having the most *devastating* pains in the back of my head. Doctor Ogden says it's simply neuralgia; but nothing will ever convince me that that barber didn't *do* some-

thing to the back of my head. He was one of those weird-looking Alsatians, you know —

[Her voice trails away.]

MISS LYLE

Well, I've gotten so lately that I absolutely *hate* to travel; and yet I simply *cannot* content myself in any one place.

[She attempts to get up, and sinks back, laughing.]

TRAIN (*stepping over to her and offering her his hand*)

Can't you get up, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE (*taking his hand*)

Thanks. This divan is so low.

[He draws her up; but as she puts her right foot on the floor it gives under her and she makes a slight exclamation, laughs, and sinks against him. He catches her in his arms. She becomes suddenly still; and the laughter dies on her lips. And there is a curious pause. She gradually raises her eyes to his, then detaches herself slowly and moves away a step or two to the right, where she stands looking straight out — very still.]

TRAIN

Are you ill, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE (*tonelessly*)

No, I'm all right.

TRAIN

Can't I get you something?

MISS LYLE

No, it's nothing. (*She gives a faint little sound of amusement*) I suppose I'm not over my little spell of seasickness yet.

TRAIN

Shall I send Mrs. Ridgway out?

MISS LYLE

No, don't, please; I don't want them to know; or they'll swear I've been running wild in Europe. Just go in yourself, Mr. Train, and tell them I'll be in in a moment.

[He starts across towards the left, but stops in the middle of the room and looks back at her.]

TRAIN

I really don't like to leave you this way.

MISS LYLE

I'm quite all right, I assure you.

[He continues, rather reluctantly, across and up to the left door. And she remains perfectly still over at the divan, looking straight out. He climbs the three steps leading up to the door, then turns again, with a slightly troubled expression, and looks back at her. And there is a physical stillness. Then he turns away slowly and goes down the hallway. She waits quietly for a moment, then gradually lets her eyes follow his pathway, — along the floor; and presently she moves in a dream to the middle of the room, her eyes still fastened on the door. At the middle of the room she stops, and beholds the mystery. The curtain commences to descend slowly. And she wanders towards the left door.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT

ACT II

Same as Act I, about four weeks later, in the afternoon. Edwards appears at the left door.

EDWARDS

MR. FITLER. (*He steps aside, and Gehring Fitler appears and comes down the steps into the room. He comes forward and crosses towards the right, glancing about. Edwards comes down the steps and crosses at the back*) Miss Lyle must have gone round to the other side, Mr. Fitler; I'll go and see.

FITLER

If you will, please, Edwards.

EDWARDS

Yes, sir. She was here a few minutes ago.

[He disappears at the right, and Fitler watches him off; then turns and takes a cigarette from his case. He lights it at the little stand at the head of the divan, then comes forward and saunters across to the left and up to the door. He glances through the door, down the hallway, turns and moves across at the back towards the right.]

FITLER

How do you do, Mary.

McGRATH (*out at the right*)

Oh, how do you do, Mr. Fitler, — you're quite a stranger.

[She comes into view, carrying an armload of roses and a pair of scissors. Fitler strolls forward at the right.]

FITLER

Rather, yes; I've just got back to town.

McGRATH (*crossing to the left, at the back*)

Yes, I saw in the paper you were away.

FITLER

I've been up in Canada for the last three weeks.

McGRATH

The paper that I saw said you were in Cuba.

FITLER

I was there for a while, but it got too hot; so a friend of mine had a boat, and we went on up to Canada, — through the St. Lawrence.

McGRATH

They say it's beautiful up that way.

FITLER

Yes, very nice indeed.

McGRATH (*coming forward a few steps at the left*)

I suppose you were surprised to hear that Miss Lyle was back.

FITLER

Yes, I was enormously surprised. Mr. Ridgway told me to-day at lunch. I met him at the Club when I got in.

McGRATH

She's been back for nearly four weeks now.

FITLER

She came back a little ahead of time, didn't she?

McGRATH

Yes, we didn't expect her much before now, but I guess she must have gotten tired of it over there or something.

FITLER

How is she, Mary?

McGRATH

Well, I don't think she's a bit well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitler.

FITLER

Is that so?

McGRATH

No, I don't. And I don't think you'll think so either, when you see her.

FITLER

What's the matter with her?

McGRATH

I don't know, Mr. Fitler, what's the matter with her; but I don't think she's been well since ever she came back from Europe.

FITLER

Has she seen a doctor at all?

McGRATH

She won't see anybody, Mr. Fitler, that's the trouble. She hasn't been outside of this place one single time since she's been back — not once. And she won't let you tell anybody she's here, so there hasn't been a soul out to see her.

FITLER

Hasn't Mrs. Ridgway been out to see her?

McGRATH

Mrs. Ridgway didn't know she was here, till she called up this morning. She thought she'd gone to White Sulphur Springs with Miss Peyton. But she said she sent a letter to her there and it came back, so then she called me up to find out where she was.

FITLER

You told her she was here, didn't you?

McGRATH

Yes, I did, Mr. Fitler.

FITLER

Because Mr. Ridgway knew it; it was he that told me.

McGRATH

Well, I thought it was time to tell somebody something, — because things can't go on this way.

FITLER

Is Mrs. Ridgway coming out?

McGRATH

She said she'd be out right away; so I've been expecting her all day. I knew Mr. Lyle'd blame *me* if anything happened, and Miss Lyle wouldn't let me send him word of any kind.

FITLER

When is Mr. Lyle coming back?

McGRATH

He's due here to-day; the secretary called up from his office to have one of the chauffeurs meet him at the station this afternoon.

FITLER

Well, Miss Lyle isn't really *ill*, is she, Mary?

McGRATH

There's something the matter with her, Mr. Fitler, whatever it is. She won't come to her meals, and when she does come she just sits there and picks like a child that'd be half sick. There were two days last week that I don't think she broke her fast once.

FITLER

And you say she doesn't go out at all?

McGRATH

She hardly ever comes out of her room, Mr. Fitler —

(*Fitler turns away slowly, with a troubled expression, and looks out toward the right*) except maybe once and a while in the afternoon she'll take a walk down to the rose gardens and sit there. (*She moves a step or two towards the right and looks in the direction he is looking*) I guess that's where she is now. And I went down there the other evening to try and coax her to come to her dinner; and I'm telling you the truth, Mr. Fitler, I could hear her crying before I saw her. (*Fitler turns sharply and looks at her quizzically*) I don't think I ever heard anybody cry so hard before in *my* life. So I wish you'd talk to her, Mr. Fitler, if you get the chance while you're here, and try to find out what's the matter with her; for she has me worried sick. And she gets into such tempers if you say anything to her, that for peace sake you keep quiet. She has that poor French maid of hers nearly out of her mind.

[*She starts for the door up at the left.*]

FITLER

She's probably out here by herself too much.

MCGRATH (*turning at the top of the steps and looking out toward the right*)

Did you find Miss Lyle, Edwards?

EDWARDS (*out at the right*)

Yes, she was taking a bit of a walk. (*He comes into view, and McGrath goes down the hallway*) She said to tell you she'd be up immediately, Mr. Fitler.

FITLER (*moving forward at the right*)

Thanks, very much, Edwards.

EDWARDS (*crossing at the back*)

You're very welcome, sir, I'm sure.

[*He goes up the steps and out at the left. And Fitler sits*

down on the divan, rests his right arm on the arm of the divan, and looks curiously at the tip of his cigarette. Suddenly he gets up nervously, glances over his left shoulder, toward the right, and moves across to the left of the room, turns and crosses back again, at the back of the room. He evidently sees Miss Lyle out at the right and waves his hand to her, then hurries out to meet her. There is a pause; and McGrath appears at the left door, sees that Mr. Fitler has met Miss Lyle, and withdraws again. And there is another pause.

MISS LYLE (*out at the right*)

I suppose I look terrible; everybody tells me so.

FITLER

Well, I have seen you look a great deal better, Tony.

MISS LYLE

You're sunburned, aren't you?

FITLER

I suppose so; (*Miss Lyle wanders in at the right, followed by Fitler*) I've been out of doors a good bit during the past six weeks.

[*She puts her vanity case down on the little table at the head of the divan as she passes it, and comes forward at the right, rather wearily. She is pale and generally changed in her appearance; and the cold, almost meditative blue of her dress seems to fit, or probably reflect, her personal tone. She is wearing a full-length coat of the same material as the dress, heavily trimmed with summer ermine.*

MISS LYLE

How did you know I was here?

FITLER

Fenton Ridgway told me to-day at the Club at lunch.

[*Miss Lyle turns and looks at him.*

MISS LYLE

How did he know?

FITLER

I don't know; I didn't ask him.

MISS LYLE (*moving to the lower arm of the divan to sit down*)

I suppose it's impossible to keep one's whereabouts a secret these days.

FITLER (*reaching for a tiny wicker stool at the right of the center chair and bringing it towards her*)

Why should you want to keep them a secret, Tony?

MISS LYLE

Because I'm tired of seeing people.

FITLER (*sitting down and looking up at her*)

You're not tired of seeing *me*, are you?

MISS LYLE

Well, at least, there's an element of novelty about seeing you.

FITLER

That's your fault.

MISS LYLE

Oh, of course, — everything is *my* fault.

FITLER

You went to Europe, didn't you?

MISS LYLE

And you went to Cuba.

FITLER

But, not till after you'd gone.

MISS LYLE

Why didn't you follow me to Europe?

FITLER

Now, I explained the impossibility of that, Tony.

MISS LYLE (*rising wearily*)

I'm not reproaching you, dear boy; (*she passes in front of him*) but everybody blames me for everything.

[*He reaches for her left hand, impulsively, and stops her.*]

FITLER

I don't. I've never blamed you for anything in my life. Now, have I?

[*She turns her head and looks at him, indifferently.*]

MISS LYLE

No, — you've always been very nice.

[*He kisses her hand ardently, and she looks at his bowed head with a certain detachment. Then he looks up suddenly, into her eyes, and there is a slight pause.*]

FITLER

How does it feel, Antoinette, to be loved the way you are loved?

[*She detaches herself, with a movement of controlled annoyance, and moves across towards the left and up to the door.*]

MISS LYLE

How should I know?

FITLER

You should, if you have any understanding of my feeling for you.

MISS LYLE (*removing her coat, abstractedly, and laying it across the back of the large chair just below the door*)

I don't suppose one ever appreciates that kind of thing, Gehring.

[*She glances out the left door. He rises suddenly, replaces the little stool, and moves across towards the left. She returns, and they stop within a few paces of each other.*]

FITLER

What's the matter, Antoinette?

MISS LYLE

Nothing 'specially.

FITLER

Now, don't evade me, please.

MISS LYLE

I'm not evading you.

FITLER

Something has happened to you, since I saw you last.

MISS LYLE

Oh — (*she moves across above him towards the center chair*) many things have happened to me, Gehring, since you saw me last.

[*She leans against the chair.*]

FITLER

But, it's something serious, Tony, for you've changed enormously, — even in your appearance.

MISS LYLE

I suppose so.

FITLER

And Mary says you scarcely eat anything at all.

MISS LYLE

What was she doing, giving you a diagnosis of me?

[*She sinks into the chair.*]

FITLER

I simply asked her how you were, and she said she thought you were ill.

MISS LYLE

I can hardly be so very ill, or I couldn't do all the walking I do.

FITLER

But, she says you haven't been outside the place since you've been back.

MISS LYLE

Well, one can do plenty of walking on this place without going outside of it.

FITLER (*turning away to the left*)

Well, there's something the matter, Tony; and I'm going to be terribly upset till you tell me what it is.

MISS LYLE

I don't know what it is myself, Gehring, (*he looks at her*) so how should I be able to tell you.

[*He sits down on the bench; and there is a pause. Presently, he looks at her, from under his eyelids.*]

FITLER

Did you have a nice time in Europe?

MISS LYLE

No — I didn't; I had a perfectly ghastly time.

FITLER

What was the matter?

MISS LYLE

I went away with the wrong people.

FITLER

Did you think about *me* at all, while you were away?

MISS LYLE

I didn't get a chance to think about anything much, — that was the trouble; somebody else tried to do my thinking *for me*. (*There is a pause*) Did you have a nice trip?

FITLER

As nice as I expected to have.

MISS LYLE

What was the matter with you?

FITLER

You weren't there.

MISS LYLE

Well, I'm here now, so I hope you're having a nice time.

[He rests his elbows on his knees and looks unseeingly at the backs of his hands.]

FITLER

Haven't you anything to say to me, Tony?

MISS LYLE

What about?

FITLER

About the only thing that's of any interest to me. *(She looks straight ahead, and he looks at her steadily, under his brows)* I had rather expected that you would have, when you'd get back.

MISS LYLE *(in a level tone)*

Yes, I have something to say to you about that, Gehring; perhaps that's what I've been evading; for I don't think it'll be very agreeable news to you. *(He remains very still)* But, I hope you won't mind too much. I suppose we've all got to hear certain bits of bad news in a lifetime. I heard one particularly bad bit when I got back. And it's really more or less on account of that that I feel obliged to give you this news now. *(She looks at him)* I heard that my father was thinking about getting married again; and, naturally, it was quite a shock to me. Not at first, particularly, because I simply dismissed it as an absurdity; but since then I've had time to think it over more reasonably, and I'm amazed that the probability hadn't occurred to me before. But somehow or another I'd never thought of my father in that connection. I don't know why I didn't particularly, — he's a comparatively

young man, — but I just didn't. But, evidently, from what I hear, *he* did; and has been thinking that way for some time. And, according to report, he's simply waiting now for me to think the same way about myself; — so that he'll be spared the necessity of putting a step-mother over me, I suppose. So we expect him back to-day, and he and I'll very likely discuss it; and I want to be able to tell him definitely not to wait; that I have no idea of getting married. — That's the bit of disagreeable news that I have to give you, Gehring. *[There is a pause.]*

FITLER

Well, you mean that you have no idea of getting married right away; (*she shakes her head negatively*) that's what you mean, isn't it, Tony?

MISS LYLE

No, it isn't; I mean that I have no idea of getting married at all.

[He gets up, with a stunned expression, and, keeping his eyes on her, moves across nearer to her.]

FITLER

You can't mean that, Tony?

MISS LYLE

That is exactly what I mean, Gehring.

FITLER

But, my dear girl, everybody is waiting for the announcement of our engagement.

MISS LYLE

I know they are; that's what my father's waiting for, too.

FITLER

Well, naturally, Tony, why shouldn't he?

MISS LYLE

But, we were never definitely engaged.

FITLER

My dear, what difference does that make; we could have been engaged long ago if you'd been willing; but, naturally, people assumed that that would follow whenever you were ready.

MISS LYLE (*rising, with a touch of desperation, and moving towards the right*)

I did myself; but I've changed my mind.

FITLER (*following her*)

Well, what has *made* you change your mind, Tony?

MISS LYLE (*stopping at the right*)

Many things.

FITLER

Well, why don't you tell me what they are?

MISS LYLE

Because I don't know what they are myself.

FITLER

You must know what they are, Tony!

MISS LYLE (*raising her left hand to silence him*)

Listen, Gehring — it isn't only my mind that's changed, it's everything about me.

FITLER

Well, what has caused the change, Tony? There must be some reason for it.

MISS LYLE

There is; but that reason is not enough in itself to have made the change that has come about in me.

FITLER

Did you meet somebody while you were in Europe?

MISS LYLE

No, I didn't.

FITLER (*taking her left hand suddenly and passing above her towards the divan*)

Let's sit down for a minute; I want to talk to you.

MISS LYLE (*disengaging herself definitely, and moving across towards the left*)

I don't want to sit down; (*he looks after her, astonished*)
I've been sitting all day.

FITLER (*following her*)

Well, I just want to talk to you for a minute.

MISS LYLE (*turning in the middle of the room*)

There's nothing you could say, Gehring, that would have the slightest effect upon me as far as this matter is concerned.

FITLER

Well, will *you* talk to *me*, then, Tony, and let me know something about this thing!

MISS LYLE (*breaking in upon him, and raising her voice*)

Yes, yes, yes! — That's what I want to do; (*she moves up towards the left door to assure herself that no one is within hearing*) so please don't make it difficult, for I haven't energy enough to argue with you.

[*She looks out the left door; and Fitler, panic-stricken, turns away and crosses towards the right, trying to encompass the situation. Miss Lyle turns from the door and comes forward again at the left.*]

FITLER (*crossing towards her*)

Has anybody been saying anything to you about *me*, Antoinette?

MISS LYLE

What *could* they say?

FITLER

That I drank too much, probably.

MISS LYLE

I knew that, Gehring; and it's one of the things that would have had to be considered if I'd ever married you.

FITLER

But it's not a consideration now?

MISS LYLE

Not now.

FITLER (*going closer to her*)

And you'll give me no reason except that you've changed your mind?

MISS LYLE

Yes — I will — I'll give you the reason that made me change my mind.

FITLER

What is it?

[*There is a pause, during which Miss Lyle looks straight ahead.*]

MISS LYLE

I told you — that I hadn't met anybody while I was in Europe.

FITLER

Yes?

MISS LYLE

But I *didn't* tell you that I *had* met somebody since I've come back from Europe.

[*Fitler makes a stupified, questioning gesture towards her, then turns towards the back of the room, despairing.*]

FITLER

Oh, my God!

MISS LYLE

I met him the day after I got back.

FITLER

So *that's* it.

MISS LYLE

And he was the first man that ever held me cheap!

[*She turns to the bench at the left.*]

FITLER (*coming down again to her, frantically*)

Listen to me, Antoinette —

MISS LYLE

And why shouldn't he.

FITLER

How could you *possibly* fall in love with another man if you'd really been in love with me?

MISS LYLE

But I *haven't* been in love with you.

FITLER

You have, Antoinette!

MISS LYLE

It's the truth.

FITLER (*turning away towards the right*)

It can't be the truth; — and I won't allow myself to believe it.

MISS LYLE

I simply *thought* I was in love with you; but I realize since I met him, that I didn't know the meaning of the word.

[*She sits down.*]

FITLER (*coming towards her again*)

What's this man's name?

MISS LYLE

What does it matter?

FITLER

I've got to *know*, Tony.

MISS LYLE

What would you do; look him up and assassinate him?

FITLER

Now, don't *torture* me, Antoinette, for God's sake! (*She raises her right hand, to suggest the possibility of listeners, and gives a half-glance over her left shoulder toward the hall door*) I'm in love and I'm jealous; and I can't bear the thought of your being in love with anybody else.

MISS LYLE

His name wouldn't mean any more to *you*, Gehring, than mine does to *him*.

FITLER

Well, why won't you tell me who he is?

MISS LYLE

Because I know what you are.

FITLER

I give you my word of honor, — I won't —

MISS LYLE

I don't want you to make any promises; I've heard you make them before, and I don't believe you. (*He turns away to the right and crosses the room in controlled desperation*) I know exactly what you're capable of, in one of your emotional tantrums. And I refuse to be the cause of any unpleasant involvements for this man.

FITLER

Funny, — the idea of another man never occurred to me as far as you were concerned.

[*He goes up to the back of the room.*]

MISS LYLE

It didn't to me, either, and yet it happened.

FITLER (*looking off to the right*)

I don't know what'll become of me, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

I assure you your jealousy is entirely without cause.

FITLER (*coming forward again at the right*)

You're in love with him, aren't you?

MISS LYLE

Even so —

FITLER

Isn't that enough!

MISS LYLE

But he doesn't know that I exist.

FITLER

He's met you, hasn't he?

MISS LYLE

That's the reason I say your jealousy is without cause; for there's far less danger of *his* marrying *me* than there is of my marrying anybody else.

FITLER (*crossing to her suddenly*)

Where did you meet him, here?

MISS LYLE

Yes.

FITLER

What did he do, that you say he held you cheap?

[*There is a still pause.*]

MISS LYLE

He simply *looked* at me. (*Fitler turns away, towards the back, with a sound of impatient contemptuousness*)
And listened to my inane chatter.

FITLER

That's the veriest infatuation.

MISS LYLE

That goes with it, I suppose. But he looked at me in a way that made me see myself through his eyes.

FITLER (*coming down to her again*)

Well, why should you regard *his* estimate of you as so important?

MISS LYLE (*impatiently, and raising her voice*)

Because it was the true one! — the one that I've been gravitating towards myself for a long time. The estimate of a sane and decent and worthy man.

[*Fitler slides on to the bench above her and speaks over her right shoulder.*]

FITLER

I can be that, Antoinette, for your sake.

MISS LYLE

I believe you are most of it already.

FITLER

I can be all of it, Tony, at a word from you.

MISS LYLE

What right have I to *ask* it?

FITLER

You don't have to ask it, darling.

MISS LYLE

There's no worth in *me*, Gehring; why should I exact it in another?

FITLER

You're underestimating yourself, Tony.

MISS LYLE

No, it's you that's doing that.

FITLER

In what way am I doing it, dear?

MISS LYLE

You're underestimating my soundness of mind — my ability to come to a few honest conclusions about myself — and my courage to admit the *truth* of those conclusions.

FITLER

Well, what conclusions *are* they, Tony?

MISS LYLE

My own unworthiness, chiefly.

FITLER

That's infatuation, dear.

MISS LYLE

And the meaninglessness and absurdity of my life.
And the lives of everybody around me.

FITLER

This man has simply impressed you enormously; and I'm surprised that a girl as intelligent as you doesn't realize that the reaction from a thing of that kind is quite as sudden and complete as the thing itself.

MISS LYLE

There can be no reaction from a fact, — other than to admit it or run away from it. And that's what I've been doing — for the past three years: running from one end of the world to the other, — to get away from *myself*. And I've grown tired of it: so tired that I prefer to stand still, — and admit the fact.

FITLER

But, surely, you must be able to admit some value in yourself, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Only the promise of a value.

[Fittler slips to his knee and looks at her imploringly.]

FITTLER

Well, can't we realize that together, darling?

MISS LYLE *(looking straight out)*

Not you and I, Gehring. *(He drops his head on to her hand, in an agony of despair)* That's one of the things I've had to admit. I have seen the man, at whose bidding I might rise to the fulfillment of any worth that's in me.

FITTLER *(frantically)*

I don't know how you can say such a thing to me!

MISS LYLE *(rising, and lifting her arms hopelessly)*

Because that bidding will not be forthcoming; *(there is a pause; then she moves slowly across towards the middle of the room)* so what does it matter what I say — or do — or think? *(She continues on up to the right, where she stands and looks out to the right, away off. Fittler drags himself up on to the bench again and sits leaning dejectedly forward on his knees, with his head in his hands. There is silence for a moment: then Miss Lyle comes forward at the right, stops and looks over at him. She is evidently touched by his attitude, and moves across to comfort him. She puts her left hand on his head and he takes her other hand and kisses it)* I'm desperately sorry to hurt you this way, Gehring, *(she raises her head and eyes)* — but I'm a woman in love: and I have said and thought things during this past month that I never dreamed of before, — let alone to wonder whether or not I was capable of saying or thinking them.

FITTLER *(looking up at her)*

And I'm a man in love, Tony; in love with you.

MISS LYLE

I appreciate it, dear boy, from the bottom of my heart. And I tell you truthfully — that I could weep my eyes out — (*she disengages herself slowly and moves a step or two below him*) for the hopelessness of it all.

FITLER (*rising desperately*)

It can't all be so hopeless, Tony —

MISS LYLE

It is, Gehring.

FITLER (*striding towards the middle of the room*)

I won't allow it to be.

MISS LYLE (*sinking on to the bench*)

As hopeless as it is for me.

[*She has a moment of hard, bitter weeping. Fitler stands irresolute in the middle of the room. The sound of her weeping calms his panic, and he hastens back to comfort her.*]

FITLER (*resuming his place above her on the bench, and speaking over her right shoulder*)

Listen to me, darling — listen, Tony — I don't mind your loving somebody else better than you love me — You can't help that, I suppose, any more than I can help loving you. But that shouldn't make it hopeless. I daresay this love thing is never absolutely equal. One always loves more than the other; and I'm willing to be that one. I'm willing to be satisfied with whatever you give me; for no one will *ever* love you, Tony, as I have loved you. (*He bows his head and kisses her shoulder; and there is a stillness*) I've rather despised myself for it sometimes, for I thought it was making me soft. I haven't been able to think of you without tears coming into my eyes, — even when you've treated me badly. But, I haven't minded that particularly, for I've

always had the thought that some day you'd marry me; and the happiness of that thought has blotted out everything else. And that's the thought I've really built the future on. And if it's swept away, — (*he rises, as though he were suffocating, and turns towards the back of the room*) — I tell you the God's truth, Tony, — I don't know what'll become of me. (*He moves across towards the right*) I suppose I'll drink myself to death, — or go out of my mind or something.

MISS LYLE

It's that quality in you, Gehring, that's part of the hopelessness of all this.

FITLER (*coming forward at the right*)

I can't *help* it, Tony; I am what I am. (*Moving towards her*) One of those men that simply *must* have some woman to devote his life to. And what woman *could* I devote my life to after you?

MISS LYLE

You have no idea how funny that sounds to me.

FITLER

That's because you're depreciating yourself, dear, (*she shakes her head slowly from side to side*) just as everybody does when he's first in love.

MISS LYLE

I'm simply not deceiving myself any longer.

FITLER

Why, what have you *done*, Tony, that you should have such an idea?

MISS LYLE (*vehemently*)

I've done nothing at all! that's precisely the point. With every advantage that a girl could possibly have, I've done absolutely nothing.

FITLER

Well, what *could* you have done in your position?

MISS LYLE (*rising, and violently*)

I could have been *civil* to people, at least; (*she passes in front of him and continues towards the right*) and I haven't been. You should know *that*, if anybody should. [*She goes on up at the right and stands looking off.*]

FITLER (*moving to the center of the room*)

I haven't minded that, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Well, I should have minded it, for I knew better. (*She turns and comes forward at the right*) But I had a rôle to play. (*She looks at him*) The Notorious Tony Lyle — that ridiculed every sincerity, and thought it smart to say and do the meanest and most embarrassing thing to everybody on every occasion.

FITLER

You haven't done anything of the kind.

MISS LYLE (*raising her hand to him*)

I know *exactly* what I've done, Gehring; (*she moves down to the right*) you can't tell me anything about it. (*She comes to a stop and stands looking straight out. And there is a pause. He stands looking at her*) I've been a law unto myself ever since I can remember; and people have been stupid enough to put up with it, — and develop in me an arrogance of attitude, and sense of self-importance, that seems so cheap and ridiculous to me now, (*she moves across towards the left again*) that I want to run away somewhere, and hide myself for the rest of my life.

FITLER

I can't see that you've done very differently from any other girl in your set.

MISS LYLE (*passing below the bench and up towards the back of the room at the left*)

Well, that set has become intolerable to me. (*She turns at the back of the room and comes forward again, at the right of the bench*) I haven't one single accomplishment.

FITLER

That isn't true, Antoinette.

[*She stops, on a line with him.*]

MISS LYLE

Not a solitary one; for I've never done anything that required the slightest exertion or caused me the least inconvenience.

FITLER

You have many accomplishments.

MISS LYLE

Well, tell me what they are.

FITLER

I can't enumerate them offhand.

MISS LYLE (*turning away, and moving forward to the lower corner of the bench*)

Because they're not there to enumerate. — I can sputter a few French phrases, and I've read the latest dirty novel; and that's the extent of my accomplishments. (*She sits on the bench and taps her foot on the floor. Suddenly she turns and looks at him*) I've never even been to school; did you know that? For I refused to go; and when instructors were brought here they refused to stay; because I laughed at the idea of correction or discipline of any kind. (*She turns away again, and makes a little sound of bitter amusement*) I don't believe I could add up a single column of figures, and do it correctly.

FITLER

A girl in your position has no particular need of accomplishments of that kind.

MISS LYLE (*turning to him with a touch of anguish*)

It isn't the *lack* of accomplishment that I'm deploring; it's the lack of the quality in *me* — that goes into the making of accomplishment. — I seem to have absolutely nothing — (*she looks away out, searchingly*) but the ability to see that nothingness. I suppose that's rather an unfortunate ability in a girl situated and brought up as I've been; for sooner or later it's bound to bring her face to face with herself.

FITLER (*turning away, and half-sitting on the arm of the center chair*)

I don't think you'd have come to any such conclusion if you hadn't met this man.

MISS LYLE

Oh, yes, I would; this has been growing on me for a long time. I think it began rather definitely about three years ago, when a girl had to come out here from my father's office to go over some things with me in my mother's estate. — I remember it was about three o'clock in the afternoon when she came, and I wasn't up yet. I had danced till nearly six that morning, and I was dead. So I had them send her upstairs. And when she came into my room — and I listened to her for a while — I found myself thinking — what a *nice* girl she was — so clear-eyed and intelligent. And I thought she'd probably been up since seven in the morning, — going over my *undistributed* income. (*She gives a hard little laugh*) And it appealed to my sense of humor. And I got the impression that it appealed to hers. I felt so

messy, and stupid, and common, by comparison. And that's exactly the way I felt when this man looked at me here a month ago. (*Fittler is annoyed*) I was a product that he didn't approve. A kind of — social curiosity, that he didn't quite think should be publicly exhibited.

FITTLER

He probably didn't think anything of the kind.

MISS LYLE

It was in his eyes; I could see it. I resented it terrifically at first, of course; I'd been accustomed to a different attitude from men. But after I'd listened to him at dinner, and then afterwards, the few times he was here, I found myself thinking, why not? — Why shouldn't he regard me in that way?

FITTLER (*rising impatiently*)

You might feel very different about him and his impressions if you knew him better.

MISS LYLE

I wouldn't feel different about my own.

FITTLER (*coming suddenly closer to her*)

But, Tony, since you say he isn't interested in you, why can't you give me a chance? You certainly won't spend your whole life this way; and there isn't anything I couldn't do at a word from you.

MISS LYLE (*with a touch of despair*)

And who is to give *me* that word!

FITTLER

I can give it to you, Tony. (*She moves deprecatingly*)

I know you don't think I have the stamina to win your respect, but I have.

MISS LYLE

What have you ever done that I should think otherwise?

FITLER

Nothing at all, I admit it.

MISS LYLE

You've been drinking and idling ever since I've known you.

FITLER

I know it, Tony, but I'm fed up on all that now; and I want to do something useful. But I *can't* without you to do it for. My father wants me to go into his business —

MISS LYLE (*interrupting him*)

Listen, Gehring —

FITLER (*sliding quickly on to the bench above her*)

What is it, dear?

MISS LYLE (*with level and measured emphasis*)

Eleven out of the fourteen girls that came out the year I came out have been married since and divorced.

FITLER

That wouldn't happen to us, Tony.

MISS LYLE

And some of them married *again* and divorced.

[*She rises, definitely, and crosses towards the right.*]

FITLER (*rising and following her*)

You *know* that couldn't happen to us, dear.

MISS LYLE

Ah, — the Lovers' Litany, my dear boy.

FITLER

You know it's true, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Love like ours will never die.

FITLER

Mine couldn't die, Antoinette, any more than love itself could die.

MISS LYLE (*stopping near the divan*)

They probably thought that, too.

FITLER

But, not as I think it.

MISS LYLE

I don't doubt that you love me, Gehring.

[*He makes a rapid movement, and takes her tenderly in his arms.*]

FITLER

I don't know that there's another woman in the world, Antoinette, I give you my word of honor. I never have known it since the first day I met you. There's a glamour about you for me somehow or another — that seems to have blotted out everything else in my life. I suppose it's that I love you, that's all.

[*He kisses her hair.*]

MISS LYLE (*with quiet decision*)

But I do not love you, Gehring.

FITLER

I can make you love me.

MISS LYLE

Maybe you can —

FITLER

I know I can.

MISS LYLE

But I've seen nothing in you so far to convince me of it.

FITLER

Well, give me a chance, my dear girl.

MISS LYLE (*detaching herself with firmness, and moving a step or two down towards the right*)

I can't afford the risk.

FITLER (*following her*)

There'll be no risk, Tony; I promise you upon my soul
I won't fail you.

MISS LYLE

I might fail you.

FITLER

You couldn't do that, Tony!

MISS LYLE (*raising her voice in desperate impatience*)

What guarantee is there against it?

FITLER

I know you too well.

MISS LYLE (*fiercely, and crossing in front of him towards the left*)

And I know *myself* too well, — to allow you to build upon any such chance. (*He turns, defeated, and sinks on to the divan. She continues to the middle of the room*)

I will *not* become one of those caricatures of women — that I'm running into all over the world. (*She moves up towards the door at the left*) Disillusioned and divorced, and married and divorced again — (*she turns and moves across at the back, towards the right*) like a lot of horrible monkeys. My life is sufficiently ridiculous, without making it any more so.

FITLER

I don't think you have the right to do this to me, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE (*looking off at the right*)

I'm too fond of you, Gehring, to deceive you by any attitude of kindness.

[*Edwards appears in the left door.*]

EDWARDS

Mrs. Ridgway's motor has just come through the gate,

Miss Lyle. (*She turns and looks at him*) I wondered if you wanted to see her.

[*She moves forward to the little table at the head of the divan.*]

MISS LYLE

Yes, I'll see her.

EDWARDS (*withdrawing*)

Very good, Miss.

[*Miss Lyle picks up her vanity case and touches her face with the puff. Fitler turns to her in a daze.*]

FITLER

Who did he say was coming?

MISS LYLE

Eleanor Ridgway.

[*Fitler begins to drag himself up.*]

FITLER

Well, I think I'd better go, then, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Don't you want to see her?

FITLER (*moving slowly across towards the left*)

Not now, no; I don't want to see anybody. (*He stops in front of the center chair, as though unable to proceed*)

I just want to get away somewhere, and think this thing over. (*He continues dejectedly to the steps leading up to the left door, where he stops, with his right foot on the first step. She remains perfectly still, looking straight out. He turns and looks back at her*) Do you mind if I call you up in a day or two?

MISS LYLE

I hope you will, Gehring.

FITLER

You might feel a little different about all this. (*She*

moves her head slowly and definitely from side to side)

I'll call you up to-morrow.

[He turns away, climbs the steps wearily, and goes out. She stands thinking for a moment, then moves forward and across towards the left. Near the bench she stops, looks in the direction of the left door, turns and moves back to the center chair; where, after a second thought, she sits down, and looks mournfully at the floor in front of her. There is a pause; and then Mrs. Ridgway appears hurriedly at the left door. She looks keenly at Miss Lyle, then glances quickly over her right shoulder down the hallway; then hastens down the steps.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Tony child.

MISS LYLE

Hello, Eleanor dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You've been ill and you never let me know.

[She kisses her.]

MISS LYLE

I haven't been ill, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*straightening up and looking at her*)

You must have been, Tony, or you couldn't look the way you do.

MISS LYLE

I haven't been feeling so very well lately, but I haven't been ill.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I didn't even *dream* you were in the city. I thought you'd gone to White Sulphur with Connie Peyton, as you said you were going to do.

MISS LYLE

I changed my mind about that.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning away towards the left door*)

Well, I don't think it was at all fair of you not to let me know.

MISS LYLE

I haven't let anybody know, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*looking out the door*)

Well, I think you might have let *me* know.

MISS LYLE

I wanted to be by myself for a while.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming back to her*)

Well, tell me, Tony, what on earth has happened between you and Gehring. I met him out there at the door as I came in, and he positively looked like a dead man. He started to say something about your being interested in a man that you met here since you've come back from Europe; but he wasn't able to tell me who it was, for he couldn't speak: so he just drove away (*she turns away again*) and left me standing there.

MISS LYLE

He doesn't know who it is, Eleanor, so he couldn't very well tell you.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming forward to her again*)

Well, it's probably none of my business, Tony, but I'm really alarmed about Gehring, — so I'm going to ask you to tell me *one* thing — Did you have any really serious break with him?

MISS LYLE (*tonelessly, and looking straight ahead*)

I had a serious talk with him, Eleanor, — in which I pointed out the impossibility of a marriage between us.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming forward, desperately*)

Oh, my God, Tony! (*She turns round to her left and faces her again*) That will simply be the *finish* of him.

MISS LYLE

Well, it may be the finish of me, too.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*going towards her earnestly*)

Then, why did you do such a thing, dear?

MISS LYLE

Because I refuse to go on any longer.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, my dear girl, why didn't you tell him that long ago, and not allow —

MISS LYLE (*interrupting her*)

Because I didn't *know* it long ago, or I should have told him. (*Mrs. Ridgway turns away and moves to the left. And there is a pause*) I heard rumblings of it, but I disregarded them.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming forward at the right of the bench*)

Well, of course, I don't know the particulars, Tony, but I do hope you're not exaggerating the seriousness of the thing, and doing something that we'll all be very sorry for. [*She sits on the bench.*]

MISS LYLE

I'm not exaggerating it, Eleanor, I assure you; I'm simply appreciating it: just as I'm appreciating a great many other things that I never appreciated before.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, I wish there were something I could do that would help things in some way.

MISS LYLE

There's nothing you can do, Eleanor. Gehring Fitler and I are the only ones that could do anything in this case; and we haven't done it. And now we've got to face the result. And that's what *he* didn't like, — any more than I liked to point it out to him.

MRS. RIDGWAY

What is it, Tony? (*Miss Lyle raises her left hand from the arm of the chair, as though signifying the futility of discussing it*) Things are never nearly so hopeless after they've been talked over with some one; and I think you ought to be able to talk it over with *me*. — What is it, dear?

[*Miss Lyle drops her head against the back of the chair and looks out and away off. Mrs. Ridgway looks at her steadily. Then, after a second's stillness, Miss Lyle speaks.*

MISS LYLE

I'm simply what you call — in love, I suppose. And it's done something to me. It's given me an entirely different point of view — about myself, and my life; and the lives of everybody that's made up my life. It's sort of crystallized — and clarified — everything. (*She makes a little sound of bitter amusement*) That must sound rather ironic to you, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

It doesn't at all, my dear.

MISS LYLE

After all the fun I've made of people who were in love. And of you, particularly.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You simply didn't understand it then, Tony.

MISS LYLE

I do now. And I understand how you were able to go through all you did. I believe you said something about that — that day you two were out here.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I don't remember, dear.

MISS LYLE

Something about it simply being a question with me of meeting the man.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I knew that's all it was, Tony.

MISS LYLE

Well, — I've met him, Eleanor; and I agree with you.

[There is a shrewd pause, during which Mrs. Ridgway thinks narrowly; then looks directly at Miss Lyle.]

MRS. RIDGWAY *(in a level tone)*

Who is it, Tony, — Spencer Train?

[Miss Lyle is very still. Then she turns her head slowly and meets Mrs. Ridgway's eyes. She inclines her head.]

MISS LYLE

Yes — that's who it is. *(Her eyes travel down and along the floor)* I suppose women don't usually mention names in cases of unrequited love, — but I don't mind your knowing it. *(Mrs. Ridgway strikes her palm softly upon her knee and gets up, moving thoughtfully towards the back of the room and across to the right of the center chair)* I've set him up as a kind of standard, Eleanor; and the men of my acquaintance have suffered so horribly by comparison that the thought of marrying any one of them is simply beyond my powers of imagination.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Have you seen him at all lately?

MISS LYLE

Where would I see him?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I thought he might have called you up or something.

MISS LYLE

He doesn't want to see *me*, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*coming forward at the right*)

You don't know whether he does or not.

MISS LYLE

The eyes of love are keen, my dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Mr. Train might be very much interested in you if he knew you better.

MISS LYLE

Why *should* he be, Eleanor!

MRS. RIDGWAY

Because you have many qualities that are worthy of his interest. (*Miss Lyle makes a movement of deprecation*)

But he certainly can't know about them, Antoinette, if you sit out here brooding like a recluse, and refusing to let anybody know that you're even out here.

MISS LYLE

I haven't been brooding, I've been thinking.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, whatever you've been doing, it's been very bad for you; (*she moves forward, down to the right*) for you've no idea how you look. I got a positive shock when I saw you. And if I'd known about it before, you may be sure I'd have done something.

MISS LYLE

Well, you mustn't throw me at Mr. Train, either, Eleanor, now that you do know about it —

MRS. RIDGWAY

I can't throw you at him, —

MISS LYLE

I won't allow it.

MRS. RIDGWAY

He isn't here.

[Miss Lyle becomes suddenly still.]

MISS LYLE

Where is he?

MRS. RIDGWAY

He's in Mexico on business; he won't be back before the middle of September. *(Miss Lyle gets up wearily, and moves towards the left. Mrs. Ridgway goes towards her earnestly)* But, as soon as he comes back, Tony, we've got to do something in the way of meeting him.

MISS LYLE *(facing the back of the room)*

To what end, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Why, to interest him, of course.

[Miss Lyle stops, and speaks over her left shoulder.]

MISS LYLE

So that he'd ask me to marry him, I suppose.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, why not, Tony?

MISS LYLE

Because it wouldn't be fair, Eleanor. *(Mrs. Ridgway is annoyed)* Mr. Train is a good man; and what have I left to give him?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Why, you have yourself, Tony.

[Miss Lyle makes a sound of vast amusement.]

MISS LYLE *(moving back to the center chair)*

After all the rest, I suppose?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Why, what do you mean, Antoinette?

[Miss Lyle leans on the back of the center chair and looks directly at Mrs. Ridgway.]

MISS LYLE (*speaking low and direct*)

After Lennie Rooks — that I lived with for four months at San Sebastian the summer before last. And Harvey Price — that I separated from his wife, and paid *her* a hundred thousand dollars to keep my name out of it. And the string of others that I've taken and used when I've wanted them, and then flung them aside — (*she makes a reckless gesture with her right hand and moves across above the chair towards the right*) when I didn't want them any longer.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*aghast, and crossing towards the left*)

I won't believe a word you're saying, Antoinette!

MISS LYLE

It's the truth — whether you believe it or not!

[Mrs. Ridgway turns.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

You're simply lovesick, Tony, and you're exaggerating things.

MISS LYLE (*standing up at the right, looking off*)

Maybe I am; but that hasn't prevented me from thinking clearly. And one of the things that I've been thinking is — that we can only do — what we are ready to do.

MR. LYLE (*breezing in at the left door*)

There we are!

[Mrs. Ridgway turns to him, in consternation, and holds up her right hand in greeting. Miss Lyle hastily touches her hair and tries to compose herself before turning.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Hello! Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE (*coming down the steps quickly into the room*)

Hello, Eleanor dear, — didn't expect to find you out here.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*extending her hand*)

Welcome home.

MR. LYLE (*calling across to his daughter*)

Hello, Tony!

[*He kisses Mrs. Ridgway.*]

MISS LYLE (*coming forward at the right*)

Hello, Daddy.

MR. LYLE (*coming forward at the left and crossing to greet Miss Lyle*)

It's nice to see you again.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm glad to see *you*, Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE

And how is my sweetheart these days?

MISS LYLE

We do meet occasionally, don't we?

[*He kisses her affectionately, and then hugs her, swaying her from side to side*]

MR. LYLE

Seems *years* since I saw you.

MISS LYLE (*breaking into laughter*)

Oh! You're becoming very South American in your embraces, Father.

[*She disengages herself and turns away, moving to the divan.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY (*laughing, and coming forward at the right*)

How should *you* know anything about that, my dear?

MR. LYLE

That's just what I was going to ask, Eleanor.

MISS LYLE (*sinking into the divan*)

I've danced with any number of them abroad.

MR. LYLE (*looking at her keenly*)

I think you must have danced with too many of them,

Tony, by the looks of you ; you look all played out.

MISS LYLE

I feel perfectly well.

MR. LYLE (*taking a cigar from his pocket, and moving to the stand at the head of the divan for a match*)

Well, by George, you don't look it ; you've gone away off. What's she been doing to herself lately, Eleanor ; do *you* know ?

MISS LYLE

Now, please don't get Eleanor started on me again, Daddy ; she's been laying me out here for the last ten minutes.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I've been talking to her about the way she looks, Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE (*coming forward again*)

Well, I'm glad you did, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

But she won't believe *me*.

MR. LYLE

I don't think I've ever seen you look so bad, Tony, — you must have lost fifteen pounds.

MISS LYLE

Well, that seems to be what everybody's trying to do these days.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Well, at least, they do eat something occasionally, Tony ; and Mary says you don't.

MR. LYLE

Haven't you any appetite, Tony?

MISS LYLE

I haven't had much lately.

MR. LYLE

What's the matter?

MISS LYLE

Well, I don't think a person that does as little as I do *needs* to have very much.

[*Mr. Lyle lights his cigar.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

She doesn't get any exercise, Uncle Robert, for she never *stirs* outside the place. She'll tell you that herself.

MR. LYLE

How is that, Tony? — You used to be always on the go.

MRS. RIDGWAY

She hasn't even been into town, Uncle Robert, since she came back from Europe, — not once. And that's nearly a month ago.

MR. LYLE

Why haven't you been going about, Tony?

MISS LYLE

There hasn't been any place to go, particularly.

MR. LYLE

Why haven't you had Crestley opened up?

MISS LYLE

I'm tired of the seashore, Daddy, really.

MR. LYLE

I think the seashore is just what you need; it'd probably fix you up in no time. Don't you think so, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think she needs you to be here, Uncle Robert, more

than anything else; for you're about the only one that she'll pay any attention to.

MR. LYLE

Well, I'll be here for a while now, so we'll have to take her in hand.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I knew you'd be surprised at the way she looks.

MISS LYLE

You'll have me thinking I'm on the brink of the grave, between the two of you.

MR. LYLE

Well, by Jove, there doesn't look to be a great deal of you between you and the grave right now, Tony. Isn't that right, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

It certainly is.

MR. LYLE

Yes, sir, that's the truth, Tony.

MRS. RIDGWAY

And I think there'll be a great deal less, if she doesn't start in and eat something, and go out a bit occasionally and get some exercise.

[Mr. Lyle shakes his finger at her reprovingly.]

MR. LYLE *(turning to Mrs. Ridgway)*

And how have *you* been, Eleanor, pretty well?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm always perfect in the summer, Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE

Like the hot weather, heh?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I *adore* it; there's never a thing the matter with me from the day it starts till it finishes.

MR. LYLE

Well, by George, you'd have had plenty of it if you'd been with me.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Was it hot down there?

MR. LYLE

A holy terror — there's nothing left of me but the sunburn.

MRS. RIDGWAY

You look awfully well.

MR. LYLE (*turning to the little table at the right of the center chair to get rid of the match stem*)

Oh, I guess I'll survive.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think so.

MR. LYLE

Yes, — I've often been through it before. Fenton well, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes, thanks.

MR. LYLE

And all the folks?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes, everybody's fine, thank you, Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE

Did your mother get over that little bother she had in the spring?

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, yes, she's as good as ever.

MR. LYLE

That's good.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm on my way over there now, — (*she moves up and over towards the left door*) to thank her for my birthday present.

MR. LYLE

Did you have a birthday lately?

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning and coming back*)

Oh, I'm having them all the time lately, Uncle Robert, it seems to me.

[*Mr. Lyle is amused.*]

MR. LYLE

Why don't you stop?

MRS. RIDGWAY

I *did* stop, long ago — (*Mr. Lyle laughs*) as far as general announcement is concerned. But I can't very well keep Mother from knowing about them.

MR. LYLE

No. Doesn't Fenton know about them?

MRS. RIDGWAY

He thinks he does. And I haven't blundered yet.

MR. LYLE

Better be careful; he might start making notes.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*smoothly*)

I'll become conveniently confused.

[*Mr. Lyle laughs, and she starts towards the door again.*]

MISS LYLE

I thought you'd come out here to see me, Eleanor?

[*Mr. Lyle strolls over to the left.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY (*hurrying back to the center chair*)

So I did, my dear; but I thought I may as well kill two birds with one stone. Besides, I'm sure you and your father must have *loads* to talk about.

[*She starts.*]

MR. LYLE

Not a thing in the world, Eleanor.

MISS LYLE

I think this is horrid.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I'm very polite, my dear, and I must go.

MISS LYLE

Are you going to dine over at your mother's?

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, I'm not, Tony; I've got to dine at home to-night.

MISS LYLE

Well, stop in again on your way back.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I will if I can, Tony, if it isn't too late.

[*Mr. Lyle looks at his watch.*]

MISS LYLE

What time is it, Daddy?

MR. LYLE

Ten after four.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*hurrying across at the back towards Miss Lyle*)

Oh, and I said I'd be there at four. So I must fly.
Good-by, dear.

[*She kisses Miss Lyle.*]

MISS LYLE

Good-by. Try and stop back.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*hurrying towards the left door*)

I will if I can.

MR. LYLE (*moving up to the left door*)

Bring Fenton out to dinner some night, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Yes, I will, thanks, Uncle Robert; I want to hear all about your trip.

MR. LYLE

All right, hurry along out.

[He follows her up the steps.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

Call me up, Tony.

MISS LYLE

All right, dear.

MRS. RIDGWAY *(calling back)*

Good-by, Uncle Robert.

MR. LYLE *(standing in the left door, and calling after her)*

Good-by, Eleanor dear.

MISS LYLE

Give my love to your mother.

MRS. RIDGWAY

All right, dear.

MR. LYLE

Tell her I want to come over and visit with her some afternoon.

MRS. RIDGWAY

All right, Uncle Robert, I'll tell her.

MR. LYLE

Good-by.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Good-by.

[Mr. Lyle turns and comes back down the steps again.]

MR. LYLE *(coming forward to the center chair)*

Well, Tony darling, it's mighty nice to see you again.

MISS LYLE

Its nice to see *you* again, too, Father. *(He throws her a*

kiss, which she returns. Then he sits down in the center chair) Did you have a successful trip?

MR. LYLE

I think so; although I was a bit troubled when you wrote me about Mrs. Farnsworth.

MISS LYLE

Oh, I'd almost forgotten about that.

MR. LYLE

I thought you two'd hit it off in great shape.

MISS LYLE

I suppose it was *my* fault.

MR. LYLE

Are they still over there?

MISS LYLE

I don't know; I haven't heard from them.

MR. LYLE

I haven't heard from them either.

MISS LYLE

You probably will.

MR. LYLE

Where's Connie Peyton these days?

MISS LYLE

She's up at her aunt's place in Maine, I think.

MR. LYLE

I saw them at Palm Beach on my way South.

MISS LYLE

Yes, I understood they were there.

MR. LYLE

Her aunt was telling me that Constance is going to marry that nerve specialist.

MISS LYLE

She *has* married him.

MR. LYLE

Oh, really?

MISS LYLE

So I saw in the paper.

MR. LYLE

Didn't she tell you anything about it?

MISS LYLE

She didn't tell *anybody* but the nerve specialist, from what I understand.

[*Mr. Lyle is amused, and leans forward in the chair with his elbows on his knees.*]

MR. LYLE

That's a funny one.

[*There is a pause, during which Miss Lyle looks steadily at him.*]

MISS LYLE

I hear that *you* are thinking about getting married, too, Father.

[*He is stilled for the fraction of a second: then, without moving, he suddenly shifts his eyes to hers.*]

MR. LYLE

Who told you that, Tony?

MISS LYLE

I believe it's rather generally reported; and I was wondering if it were true.

MR. LYLE

Well, it's often rather a long way, Tony, between thinking about a thing and actually doing it. (*He straightens up slowly*) The thought *has* occurred to me from time to time, naturally, — just as it's occurred to many other people I suppose — to you, yourself, probably.

MISS LYLE

No, it hasn't, Father.

MR. LYLE

Really?

[She shakes her head slowly from side to side.]

MISS LYLE

I never thought of such a thing, for some reason or other, until I heard it. And since then I've been wondering why I *hadn't* thought of it. I seem to have come very suddenly to the realization that you're a comparatively young man. And I wonder why you didn't do it long ago.

MR. LYLE

Well, I didn't think very much about doing anything, Tony, for a long time after your mother died. And when I did begin to think, I found myself thinking about *you*. And that seemed to be enough for me. But, of course, we can't expect things to go along in the same way forever; I suppose we'd get terribly bored if they did. So I've been thinking that — after you and Gehring go, — it'd probably be the sensible thing for me to follow your example. It'd be rather lonesome around here otherwise, I'm afraid.

MISS LYLE

But, I have no thought of going, Father; so I don't want you to wait for that.

MR. LYLE

What's the matter?

MISS LYLE

Nothing particularly.

MR. LYLE

Have you and Gehring had a misunderstanding of some kind?

MISS LYLE

It isn't that exactly, Father; I just don't care to marry — either Gehring Fidler or any other man. I shouldn't marry Gehring Fidler, in any case; for I don't love him; and I don't respect him particularly, either.

MR. LYLE

Well, I'm very sorry to hear that, Antoinette. (*She simply lifts her hand from the arm of the divan and lets it fall again*) I thought things were rather settled between you two.

MISS LYLE

They were never settled, Father. He evidently thought they were, too; but I've told him otherwise.

MR. LYLE

Oh, then, you've talked to him?

MISS LYLE

Oh, yes, — I told him very frankly.

MR. LYLE

When did you tell him, Tony?

MISS LYLE

I told him to-day; (*Mr. Lyle shifts his position*) he was here earlier in the afternoon.

MR. LYLE

And, how did he take it?

MISS LYLE

Oh, — he was disappointed, of course; because for the last year or two he's simply been taking things for granted.

MR. LYLE

Hum —

(*He rises, with a disturbed expression, and moves slowly towards the left.*)

MISS LYLE

Just as a great many other people have been doing.

MR. LYLE

That's too bad.

MISS LYLE

That's the reason I don't want you to wait, Father.

MR. LYLE (*turning and moving towards her*)

Well, there's no particular hurry about anything, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

But, I'd like you to marry immediately, Father, if you're thinking about marrying at all.

MR. LYLE

I *haven't* been thinking about it particularly seriously, Antoinette. As a matter of fact, I doubt that I should have thought about it at all, only that I was under the impression, just as I have no doubt a great many other people were, that it would be only a question of time till you and Gehring would marry.

MISS LYLE

Well, that will never be, Father.

MR. LYLE

Well, if it isn't Gehring, my dear, it'll very likely be some one else.

MISS LYLE

Even if it is, you mustn't wait. For no matter who it would be, it wouldn't be done in a day; and in the meantime I should feel that I was standing in your way.

MR. LYLE

Now, you shouldn't feel that way at all, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

How else *could* I feel, Father?

MR. LYLE

Well, you haven't felt that way up till now, have you?

MISS LYLE

Because I've been too absorbed in myself to stop to think *how* I felt — about anything. If I'd ever stopped long enough to think, it might have occurred to me that you needed something in your life beside business.

MR. LYLE

I had you, my dear.

MISS LYLE

How much have you *had* me, Father?

MR. LYLE

It was enough.

MISS LYLE

I don't think we've been together six months in the last five years.

MR. LYLE

And wasn't that my fault, largely?

MISS LYLE

I don't think so, Father.

MR. LYLE

I've been away a good part of the time.

MISS LYLE

I could have gone with you, as you wanted me to do.

MR. LYLE (*moving to the ash-tray at the head of the divan*)

Well, you could hardly have been expected to accompany me on business trips.

[*He puts his cigar down.*]

MISS LYLE

I could have accompanied you, whether I could have been expected to or not. But I considered my own preferences, as I've always done.

MR. LYLE (*coming forward again*)

I don't think that's quite true, Antoinette.

[*He moves towards the left.*]

MISS LYLE

Oh, yes, it is true, Father. I realize it now — and I should have realized it long ago; just as I should have realized long ago that I was standing in the way of your marriage.

[*He turns.*]

MR. LYLE

I could have married, Antoinette, if I'd wanted to.

MISS LYLE

But you considered *me*.

MR. LYLE

I considered myself somewhat, too.

MISS LYLE

But only in so far as *I* would affect you. (*He doesn't quite follow her*) You knew how long I'd put up with a stepmother if she happened to cross me; and you hesitated before the prospect of my leaving the house. That was why you didn't marry, wasn't it, Father?

MR. LYLE

There were various reasons, Tony.

MISS LYLE

But that was the principal one, I'm sure.

MR. LYLE

I considered it, of course. Bringing a stepmother in over a grown daughter is frequently unsatisfactory.

MISS LYLE

It might have been once, Father, — but not now. I've had my sway. (*He moves towards her, smiling affectionately*) You said a moment ago that things can't go on

in the same way forever : and under the circumstances I assure you I shouldn't at all mind — yielding the scepter.

[He smiles, and slips down beside her on the divan.]

MR. LYLE

You're such a sudden old lady.

MISS LYLE

I suppose that's the way one grows old, — very suddenly.

MR. LYLE *(taking her hand, leaning his cheek against hers, and putting his right arm around her shoulders)*

Well, can't we spend our declining years together, darling? Just you and I, sitting here in the sunset of life, talking about old times.

[He kisses her, looks at her, and laughs.]

MISS LYLE

I don't like the prospect, Father.

MR. LYLE

But, if I am satisfied.

MISS LYLE

But, you're not.

MR. LYLE

I am with *you*.

MISS LYLE

But, I may not always be here.

MR. LYLE

Where will you be?

MISS LYLE *(wistfully)*

Oh, — a thousand places.

MR. LYLE

You know what I think, Tony? — I think you're in love. *(He pats her hand and rises)* Yes, sir, by George, if I don't. *(He goes up to the table at the head of the divan)*

for his cigar) I think you like Gehring a great deal more than you think you do. *(She looks out and away off)* And he's been your beau for a long time. *(He comes forward again, moving towards the left)* And when you don't see him coming around any more, you're going to miss him. Now, you see if you don't. Blessings brighten as they take their flight, you know, Tony. And that beau thing is a habit that it isn't so easy to get out of. *(He turns and strolls towards her again)* Yes, sir, I'll bet you two'll have it all made up again before the month is out. You'll never be able to keep Gehring away from here; remember what I'm telling you. And after you've seen him a few times, you won't want to keep him away. *(He leans over and pats her hands)* Now, you see if I'm not right. *(He turns towards the left again)* I know a little something about that business. Only, in the meantime, we'll have to see what we can do about finding you another beau — *(he turns and looks at her, with a twinkle in his eye)* unless you want to let me be your beau. *(She doesn't smile; and he moves towards her)* I've had a lot of experience. And I can start in rather impressively, too; for I brought you something ver-ry nice from Buenos Aires. *(He plays a little tattoo on her hands again)* I have it out here in my satchel. *(He starts across and up at the left to the door)* I'll go right now and get it for you. *(Turning at the top of the steps)* And when you see it, you'll be sorry you ever had any other beau.

[He dashes out of sight. And she breaks suddenly and weeps bitterly. The telephone bell rings out at the left. She straightens up and tries to look composed. Edwards' voice can be indistinctly heard on the telephone.]

EDWARDS

Hello — Why, no, she isn't; I'm sorry; she left here a few minutes ago. — I'm sorry, I don't. — Well, will you wait just one moment, please; I'll ask her cousin, Miss Lyle; she may know. — Not at all. Just wait one moment. (*There is a slight pause, then Edwards appears in the left door*) There's a gentleman on the telephone, Miss Lyle, that would like to speak to Mrs. Ridgway.

MISS LYLE

Mrs. Ridgway has gone.

EDWARDS

Yes, Miss, I told him that, and he asked me if I knew where he might get in touch with her right away; he says it's very important.

MISS LYLE

Who is it, Mr. Ridgway?

EDWARDS

No, Miss, it's a gentleman calling from the Bachelors' Club.

MISS LYLE (*rising*)

Hang up out there, Edwards.

[*She goes up and across at the back, to the telephone.*]

EDWARDS (*withdrawing*)

Yes, Miss.

MISS LYLE (*at the telephone*)

Hello — No, this is Mrs. Ridgway's cousin, Miss Lyle — Oh, how do you do, Mr. Sloane. — Why, I'm sorry, Mr. Sloane, she just left here about ten minutes ago. — Yes, she said she was going over to her mother's place. — Yes, it's Beechwood, three, four, eight. But, I don't think she's reached there yet, Mr. Sloane; she's only

been gone from here a few minutes. — Yes, it's too bad. But, she'll probably stop back here again on her way into town, so if you want to leave any message, in case you don't get in touch with her. — Yes, I shall, Mr. Sloane. — What sort of an accident, Mr. Sloane; anything serious? — Oh, my God, how dreadful — I hope it isn't anybody *I* know — (*She listens acutely, then suddenly utters a short, breathless moan and sinks upon the telephone table, dropping the telephone and receiver from her hands. The receiver falls clear of the table and swings back and forth. After a black moment, she drags herself into a standing position*) Oh, my God — (*She staggers uncertainly and slowly backwards from the telephone, looking at it curiously, and reaching out blindly with her right hand, for support. As she nears the center chair, she turns slowly and looks straight out, hollow-eyed*) Ah, Gehring, you poor boy — (*She moves a step or two forward, then lifts her left hand towards the door and says faintly*) Father — [*She falls in a dead faint. The telephone receiver swings back and forth, and the curtain descends slowly.*]

END OF SECOND ACT

ACT III

The library at Shadow Brook, — in the afternoon, around the middle of September.

Doctor Huntington is sitting at the left of a library table, writing, and Mr. Lyle is moving towards the back of the room, at the right. He is obviously very troubled, and toys with his watch chain. He turns at the back of the room and comes forward again. The doctor looks closely at what he has written.

MR. LYLE

Have you light enough there, Doctor?

HUNTINGTON

Yes, thank you, Mr. Lyle, it's quite all right. (*Mr. Lyle continues in his pacing*) My writing is getting so bad I can't read it myself.

[The double doors at the back open, and Mr. Lyle stops. Huntington looks in the direction of the doors. Edwards appears.]

EDWARDS

Doctor Loebell.

[Edwards stands aside and the professor enters. Edwards withdraws, closing the doors behind him.]

LOEBELL (*coming forward at the right of the table, carrying his spectacles*)

I'm afraid you'll have to provide a guide for me out here, Mr. Lyle.

MR. LYLE

Did you get lost upstairs, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Very nearly.

[*Mr. Lyle and Huntington are amused.*]

MR. LYLE (*indicating the chair at the right of the table*)

Sit down, Doctor.

LOEBELL (*taking the chair*)

Thank you very much. One of the maids rescued me.

MR. LYLE

I'm afraid this place is a bit rambling.

LOEBELL

Well, my own quarters are so small that it's rather an easy matter for me to lose my bearings.

HUNTINGTON

You've probably gotten out of the habit of going into private houses, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Yes, I suppose there's something in that, too.

HUNTINGTON

Professor Loebell is one of those fortunate fellows that can stay in his office.

LOEBELL

Well, that gets pretty monotonous too, sometimes.

MR. LYLE

And I suppose you've *done* your share of the other in your time, haven't you, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Yes, — yes, I've done my share, Mr. Lyle, — of most everything.

HUNTINGTON

Mr. Lyle says he can have one of the chauffeurs go into town immediately for this, Doctor.

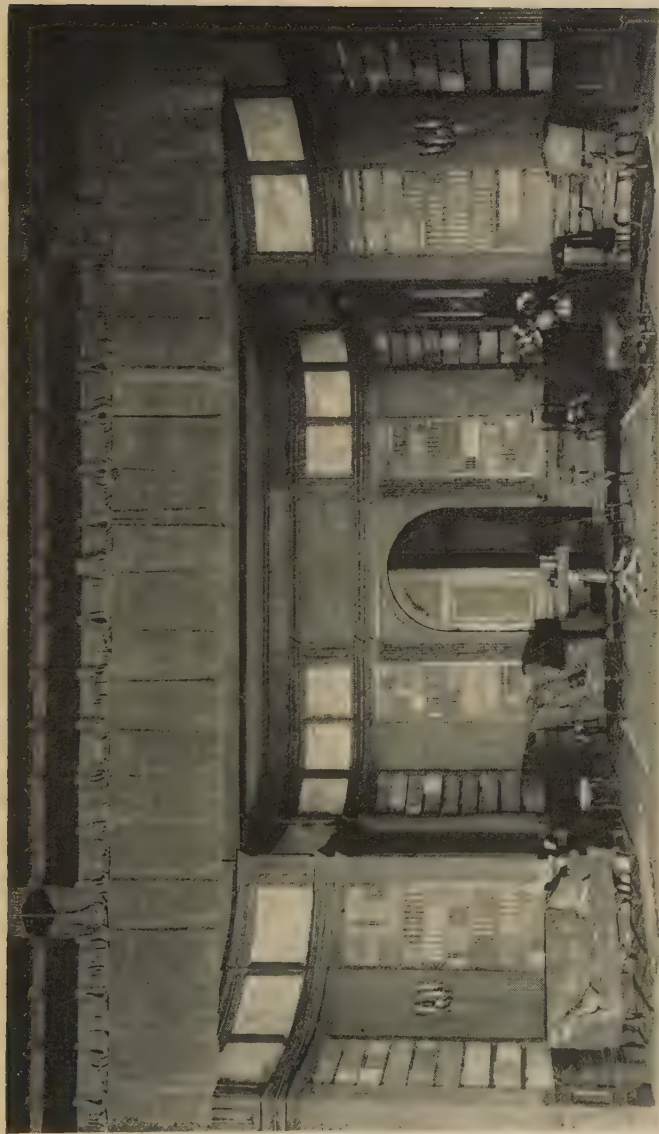


Photo. by White Studio

ACT III. BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM —

LOEBELL

Is that the first prescription?

[*Huntington half rises and hands it to him across the table.*

HUNTINGTON

Yes; I've written Norwood's address across the bottom there.

LOEBELL (*holding the spectacles up by one side*)

Yes, I see.

HUNTINGTON

I can bring the other one out myself to-morrow.

LOEBELL

That'll be time enough.

MR. LYLE

Is that ready to be sent now, Doctor?

HUNTINGTON

Yes, it can go any time now, Mr. Lyle. (*Mr. Lyle nods and goes to the push button at the right of the doors at the back*) I've written the druggist's address at the bottom.

MR. LYLE (*pushing the button*)

Very well, Doctor, I'll tell him.

HUNTINGTON

It's at the corner of Carlyle Place and Seventeenth Street.

MR. LYLE

He'll find it.

HUNTINGTON

And he may have to wait half an hour.

LOEBELL (*handing back the prescription*)

I should suggest that as soon as possible, Doctor.

[*Edwards opens the doors.*

HUNTINGTON (*taking the prescription and rising*)

I'll send it right now.

[*He goes towards Edwards.*

MR. LYLE

Tell Caldwell to take this prescription into town, Edwards, and have it filled immediately.

[Huntington hands Edwards the prescription.]

EDWARDS

Very good, sir.

HUNTINGTON

The address is written here at the bottom, Edwards.

[Loebell sits tapping the spectacles on the knuckles of his left hand, and thinking.]

EDWARDS

Yes, sir.

HUNTINGTON

The Norwood Pharmacy, Carlyle Place and Seventeenth Street.

EDWARDS *(turning to go)*

Very good, sir.

[Huntington returns to his place.]

MR. LYLE

Tell Caldwell to be as quick about it as possible, Edwards.

[He comes forward at the right.]

EDWARDS

Very good, sir.

[He closes the door.]

LOEBELL

And I wish you'd instruct the nurses too, Huntington, to be on the lookout for that that I spoke to you about.

HUNTINGTON *(sitting down, and collecting his things)*

Yes, I shall, Doctor.

LOEBELL *(turning away)*

I think it's very important.

HUNTINGTON

Yes, I'll watch it.

LOEBELL

Mr. Lyle —

MR. LYLE (*coming forward at the right*)

Yes, Doctor?

LOEBELL

I hope I haven't kept you waiting too long down here.

MR. LYLE

Not at all, Doctor — I'm glad you were able to give us so much of your time.

LOEBELL

That's nothing at all, Mr. Lyle; it's a very interesting case — very interesting indeed. I knew you were anxious, of course; but I wanted to have a little talk with your daughter myself.

HUNTINGTON

Did Miss Lyle talk with you, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Oh, yes, we had quite a talk.

HUNTINGTON

I haven't been very successful in that respect, I'm afraid.

LOEBELL

You probably lack the sympathetic ear, Doctor.

HUNTINGTON (*laughing faintly*)

Yes. (*Loebell makes a little sound of amusement*) It must be something like that.

LOEBELL

Yes, we've been talking up there for some time. And I find one very encouraging sign, Mr. Lyle, —

MR. LYLE

Well, I'm very glad to hear that, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Yes, very encouraging indeed. And that is that your daughter can laugh. (*Turning to Huntington*) Which I regard as most important, under the circumstances.

MR. LYLE

She hasn't been doing very much of that lately, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Well, she did a bit of it to-day. And I must say the quality of the laughter was very good, too.

MR. LYLE

What was she laughing about, Doctor?

[*Loebell makes a gesture of significance.*]

LOEBELL

That's a very important point, Mr. Lyle, — very important indeed. If I could be sure of that, I think I could be sure of a great many other points in the case. But there's the factor of feminine reservation there; and your daughter is very shrewd. She let me know only as much as she wished me to know.

HUNTINGTON

I daresay you were able to discover certain things for yourself, though, weren't you, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Oh, yes, yes — experience counts for something, I suppose.

MR. LYLE

Have you had similar cases to this one in your experience, Doctor?

LOEBELL

I have had about five, I should say, Mr. Lyle, in my time. Not recently; but years ago they were not at all uncommon — especially among women. They used

to be known in those days as cases of repining, — lack of the will to live. But they've become rather rare these late years: due, I have no doubt, to the many compensating factors in modern life — people are not apt to take any one experience too seriously nowadays. But, they *do* occur occasionally.

MR. LYLE

Is there any way of accounting for them, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Yes, there are a great many ways, Mr. Lyle; but, unfortunately, they lead us into considerations of psychology; and the medical profession has probably thought it wiser to avoid those considerations. But, nevertheless, we are being constantly confronted with them. I daresay you've encountered something of the kind from time to time in your practice, haven't you, Doctor?

HUNTINGTON

Yes, indeed I have, Doctor, —

LOEBELL

Yes.

HUNTINGTON

Many times.

LOEBELL

I'm sure of it.

HUNTINGTON

It's rather disquieting, too, (*Loebell makes a little sound of amusement*) to an orthodox medical practitioner.

LOEBELL

Yes, very disquieting indeed. We've probably been hugging certain of our present theories too closely.

HUNTINGTON

I'm afraid so, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Yes, I'm afraid we have. Particularly, the theory that the physical condition is simply the chorus of its atoms.

HUNTINGTON

Yes, I think we've been holding that one much too closely.

LOEBELL

Much too closely, I agree with you. I think we need hardly go beyond the present case for a contradiction of it.

HUNTINGTON

I was just thinking that myself.

MR. LYLE

You mean that my daughter's physical condition seems pretty good, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Surprisingly good, Mr. Lyle. In fact, in that respect I can't do any more than confirm the diagnosis of Doctor Huntington here.

MR. LYLE

How do you account for these sinking spells she's been having, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Well, I think they can be accounted for very largely on the basis of malnutrition, Mr. Lyle; I understand that she eats practically nothing.

MR. LYLE

Nothing at all.

LOEBELL

Well — that — with certain emotional reaction, would

very easily bring about a condition of that kind. But, in my opinion, it is chiefly with that emotional reaction that we have to deal—to discover the *cause* of it. Because it is my conviction, Mr. Lyle, that your daughter is simply—lovesick. (*Mr. Lyle keeps his eyes on him steadily; and there is a shrewd pause. Huntington shifts his eyes from Loebell to Mr. Lyle*) I asked her very bluntly if she were in love; and that was when she laughed. But she laughed a bit too long, I thought; and I got the impression that the laughter was something in the nature of a *disguised* reaction—that I had put my finger on the point. (*Mr. Lyle smiles wryly, and, with a glance at Huntington, moves towards the back of the room, where he turns and starts forward again*) So I am going to ask *you*, Mr. Lyle, if *you* can be of any assistance to us in this case.

[*Mr. Lyle stops and looks at him.*]

MR. LYLE

How do you mean, Doctor?

LOEBELL

I mean in the matter of information; for I'm convinced that there's a *man* here.

[*Mr. Lyle holds his eye.*]

MR. LYLE

Yes, there is, Doctor.

LOEBELL

I thought so.

MR. LYLE

But, unfortunately, I've never met him: I've never even seen him, as a matter of fact.

LOEBELL

Is he a desirable man?

MR. LYLE

Very much so, from what I understand. But that doesn't seem to have influenced her in the least; except as a sort of standard of comparison for the other men of her acquaintance. And for herself, too, as a matter of fact. That's the most unfortunate part of it; for the result of the comparison is the fixed idea in her mind that she's unworthy of this man's attention — or of *anybody's* attention, for that matter. (*Loebell shakes his head wisely, and Mr. Lyle moves down towards the extreme right*) I've never seen anything like it in my life.

LOEBELL

It's part of the idealism of feminine love.

MR. LYLE (*turning*)

Well, doesn't it seem rather extreme in this case, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Not at all; it can be very extreme.

MR. LYLE

Well, perhaps I haven't taken it sufficiently seriously. As a matter of fact, I didn't even *know* about it until a month after it happened, when I got back from South America; and even then I was shocked at the way she looked. But, naturally, I didn't associate it with anything of this kind. And even when my niece *told* me, the thing seemed so incredible that I was inclined —

LOEBELL

Not at all incredible, Mr. Lyle —

MR. LYLE (*turning towards the back of the room again*)

Well, at least, I didn't understand it, Doctor.

LOEBELL

I assure you there are more things in the woman heart than are dreamed of in *Materia Medica*.

MR. LYLE (*coming forward again*)

She even broke off her engagement after she met this man, — to a young man that she'd been engaged to for nearly three years.

HUNTINGTON

I think that has affected her, Mr. Lyle, as much as anything.

MR. LYLE

Oh, yes, she's gone downhill very rapidly since then.

HUNTINGTON

That was the young man that shot himself, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Ah, yes, yes.

MR. LYLE

He went straight over to the Bachelors' Club here after she gave him up and shot himself.

[Loebell inclines his head.]

HUNTINGTON

And, as I told you, Doctor, Miss Lyle got the news of his death over the telephone here.

LOEBELL

Yes, that was unfortunate; she was hardly in any condition to hear news of that kind.

MR. LYLE

She was unconscious for a solid hour after it, Doctor. I found her here in a faint when I came back into the room.

LOEBELL

It's regrettable that it couldn't have been kept from her in some way.

MR. LYLE

Well, it might have been, I suppose, — but it was just one of those things that happens. He'd left a note, you see, requesting that my niece be notified; and in trying to locate *her*, my daughter got the message.

LOEBELL

Too bad. (*He looks at the floor shrewdly*) But, — we shall have to see what we can do.

MR. LYLE

What have you done in other cases of the kind, Doctor?
[*Loebell looks at him for a second, with a kind of steady squint.*]

LOEBELL

I have done what *you* must do, Mr. Lyle; —

MR. LYLE

And what is that, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Or allow me to do it for you?

MR. LYLE

What is it?

LOEBELL

You must send for this man — that your daughter is interested in.

MR. LYLE

I have already done that, Doctor.

LOEBELL

When did you do it?

MR. LYLE

Last night — he only got back last night; he's been in Mexico for the past two months.

LOEBELL

Does he live here in this city?

MR. LYLE

Yes; and I had my niece see him immediately.

LOEBELL

And when will it be possible to get him out here?

MR. LYLE

Some time to-day, I hope.

LOEBELL (*rising*)

That's good.

[*He goes towards the back.*]

MR. LYLE

I thought my niece might be able to get him out here this morning, but evidently something delayed them.

[*Huntington rises.*]

LOEBELL

The sooner he comes, the better.

MR. LYLE

I suppose I should have sent for him before; my niece suggested it; but, as I say, he was in Mexico; and it seemed rather absurd to annoy him.

LOEBELL

Of course.

MR. LYLE

Besides, I was sure that something could be done in a medical way.

LOEBELL (*speaking deliberately, and resting his hands on the back of the chair that he has been occupying*)

I'm afraid not, Mr. Lyle. I'm sure Doctor Huntington here has done everything along that line that could possibly be done.

MR. LYLE

Yes, I'm sure he has.

LOEBELL

But, evidently, it isn't enough: so we'll have to try something else. (*He considers for a second*) Of course, it's regrettable that this man couldn't have been gotten here sooner, —

MR. LYLE (*turning and going to the back of the room again*)

Well, I suppose that's entirely my fault, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Because I will not disguise from you the fact, Mr. Lyle, that your daughter is desperately ill.

MR. LYLE (*turning and coming forward again*)

Yes, I'm afraid she is.

LOEBELL

Desperately ill.

MR. LYLE (*stopping, forward at the right*)

You don't think I've possibly let it go too long, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Well, of course, that remains to be seen. I have seen patients that were worse get better, and patients that were better, get worse. However, I would suggest that when this man comes here, your daughter does not see him alone — for the first time, at least. I think it would be better if some one else were present, yourself, or your niece, or some other member of the family.

MR. LYLE

I see.

LOEBELL

Because I don't think your daughter is quite in the condition at the present time to withstand any very serious emotional reaction.

MR. LYLE

Do you think I should talk to this man first, when he comes here, Doctor?

LOEBELL

Oh, yes, I do, by all means; I think something of the situation should be explained to him; I'm sure it will temper his attitude somewhat when he meets your daughter.

MR. LYLE

Well, what I meant, Doctor, was, — do you think it would be better for *you* to talk to him?

LOEBELL

No, no, I do not, Mr. Lyle —

MR. LYLE

I thought you might be better able to explain.

LOEBELL

No, I think that might be poor psychology.

MR. LYLE

I see.

LOEBELL (*very carefully*)

It seems to me — that it would be better to present the situation on the basis of a romantic attachment, rather than a medical necessity.

MR. LYLE

I see.

LOEBELL

I think the psychology is better.

MR. LYLE

Yes, undoubtedly it is.

LOEBELL

Besides, I'm sure that any subsequent attitude on this man's part toward your daughter will necessarily be

affected, to some extent, at least, by the knowledge of *your* attitude toward *him*.

MR. LYLE

Yes, of course.

LOEBELL

And that can be a very important consideration.

HUNTINGTON

You think it best, don't you, Doctor, not to allow Miss Lyle to think that this is in any way by way of an arrangement?

LOEBELL

Oh, by all means.

HUNTINGTON

She might refuse to see him at all, otherwise.

LOEBELL (*definitely*)

He simply called as a social attention, having heard that she was ill.

MR. LYLE

I'll tell them both to be careful of that when they come.

LOEBELL

Oh, yes, that's a very important point.

HUNTINGTON

I'm sure Miss Lyle would resent any suggestion of arrangement.

LOEBELL

Naturally — they must be as casual as possible.

MR. LYLE (*crossing towards the left*)

I'm afraid I can't be very casual about it, Doctor.

LOEBELL (*coming forward at the right*)

Well, — try as far as possible, Mr. Lyle, — not to make the condition appear too grave.

MR. LYLE

You've made me think it *is* very grave indeed, Doctor.

LOEBELL

It's grave enough, — I'll not deceive you. But then, all is not lost that is in danger. I remember being called in on a similar case some years ago — It was at a woman's college, somewhere up in New York State; and when I arrived I found the young woman in a dying condition, from no apparent cause. So I made a few inquiries, and learned that shortly before that time she'd had some kind of a fuss with the young man that she was engaged to be married to. So I took it upon myself to send for him; and he arrived the following morning, — which was a Tuesday; and by Saturday the girl had sufficiently recovered to *elope* with him. (*He extends his hand, smiling, and Mr. Lyle takes it*) So let us hope for something of the kind in this case.

MR. LYLE

I'm afraid that's all we *can* do, Doctor.

LOEBELL

I hope she'll omit the elopement feature of it, though, — for I think this would be rather an ideal place for a wedding. (*He turns away and goes up at the right towards the doors*) Plenty of room for everybody.

[*Huntington moves towards the doors.*]

MR. LYLE (*following Loebell*)

Good-by, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Good-by, Mr. Lyle.

MR. LYLE

And I'm a thousand times obliged to you for coming out.

[*He presses the button at the back.*]

LOEBELL (*turning at the doors*)

That's nothing at all, Mr. Lyle; I hope something may come of it. What did I do with my things?

HUNTINGTON

They're outside, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Oh, yes, yes, so they are.

MR. LYLE

Edwards will get them for you, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Yes, yes. And I'll keep in touch with Doctor Huntington here.

[*Edwards opens the doors.*]

MR. LYLE

Thanks ever so much, Doctor.

LOEBELL

Don't mention it at all, Mr. Lyle. Good afternoon.

MR. LYLE

Good afternoon, Doctor.

[*Loebell goes out, turning to the right.*]

HUNTINGTON

I'll be out at the usual time to-morrow, Mr. Lyle.

MR. LYLE

Very well, Doctor.

HUNTINGTON

And would you see that that bottle is given to the nurse as soon as it comes?

MR. LYLE

Yes, I'll have it taken right up as soon as Caldwell brings it.

HUNTINGTON (*going out, and following Loebell*)

Good afternoon.

MR. LYLE

Good afternoon, Doctor. Let me know, Edwards, as soon as Caldwell gets back.

EDWARDS

Very good, sir. (*He closes the doors. Mr. Lyle turns slowly and moves forward at the right to the window, where he stops and looks out for a second; then, with a troubled sigh, he comes farther forward at the right. The doors open at the back*) Mrs. Ridgway and Mr. Train are waiting in the lounge, Mr. Lyle.

[*Mr. Lyle looks at him blankly; and there is a pause.*]

MR. LYLE (*tonelessly*)

Ask them to come in, Edwards.

[*He crosses towards the left, aimlessly.*]

EDWARDS

Very good, sir.

[*He closes the doors. Mr. Lyle moves up at the left, stops within a few paces of the doors, looks at them thoughtfully, and comes forward at the right again to the window, where he stands looking out. The doors open again, and Mr. Lyle turns. There is a slight pause.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY (*entering from the left*)

Hello, Uncle Robert.

[*She comes down to him.*]

MR. LYLE

Hello, Eleanor darling.

[*He kisses her tenderly. And Train appears in the doorway. He advances a few steps and stands; and Edwards quietly closes the doors behind him.*]

MRS. RIDGWAY

How is Antoinette?

MR. LYLE

About the same.

MRS. RIDGWAY

We came while the doctors were here.

MR. LYLE

Yes, I'm sorry to have kept you waiting.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*turning to Train*)

Uncle Robert, — I want to introduce Mr. Train. This is Antoinette's father, Spencer.

[*Mr. Lyle extends his hand and Train advances. Mr. Lyle takes his hand.*]

MR. LYLE

How do you do, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

How do you do, sir.

[*Mr. Lyle looks him steadily in the eyes, then shakes his hand slowly and firmly.*]

MR. LYLE (*indicating the chair, forward, at the right of the table*)

Won't you sit down, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

Thank you.

[*He moves forward to the chair, and Mr. Lyle follows him with his eyes. And Mrs. Ridgway, looking at Train steadily, drifts smoothly towards the doors. As Train reaches the chair he turns and looks at Mrs. Ridgway.*]

MR. LYLE

Won't you sit down, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY

No, I think I'll let you and Mr. Train talk together.

MR. LYLE (*moving towards her*)

Have you been upstairs, Eleanor?

MRS. RIDGWAY (*opening the door*)

I was up a few minutes ago, but the nurse was busy.
I'll go up again after awhile.

MR. LYLE

I want to see you for a moment before you go up.

MRS. RIDGWAY (*going out*)

All right, Uncle Robert.

[*She closes the door, and Train sits down. Mr. Lyle turns and looks at Train's back, appears to decide upon a procedure, then comes rather carefully forward at the left.*]

MR. LYLE

I didn't have the pleasure of meeting you the last time you were here, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

No, you were in South America, as I remember.

MR. LYLE (*sitting at the left of the table*)

Yes, I didn't get back till around the middle of July.

TRAIN

I've been south myself for the past two months; I just got back last night.

MR. LYLE

You were in Mexico, weren't you?

TRAIN

For the most part, yes. I had a couple of weeks in Central America, but I was right in Mexico City the greater part of the time.

MR. LYLE

Well, I'm very sorry to have had to trouble you so soon after your arrival.

TRAIN

That's quite all right.

MR. LYLE

I'm sure you must have many other things to do.

TRAIN

I'm only too glad if I can be of any assistance.

MR. LYLE

Well, that's very kind of you I'm sure. (*He leans forward a bit, resting his right hand on the table*) But my asking you to come out here — was really something in the nature of a rather desperate measure; because I'm afraid it's rather a desperate remedy that we have to effect. The doctors have just left here, and they assure me that it's *quite* desperate. So I shall be very frank with you, Mr. Train. — I don't know, of course, just how much of this situation has already been explained to you, — but I assume that my niece has suggested something of it.

TRAIN

Yes, she told me something of it last night.

MR. LYLE

Well, I'm very glad of that; because, to be quite frank, Mr. Train, I find myself decidedly at a loss to know just *how* to present it to you. As a matter of fact, I've been extremely reluctant to annoy you with it at all: I felt that you could scarcely be expected to appreciate a situation that I was incapable of appreciating myself. Besides, I was of the opinion, up to a short time ago, that something could be done in a medical way. But evidently not. I have had Doctor Huntington, the regular physician, call in Professor Loebell, of whom you've probably heard, —

TRAIN

Yes, I've heard of him.

MR. LYLE

And he assures me that there are factors of feminine psychology in the case that are quite beyond his reach. He says that my daughter has evidently been impressed, in a rather extreme degree, by some *man*: and while she has never discussed anything of the kind with me, she appears to have done so with my niece, Mrs. Ridgway; and *she* tells me, Mr. Train, that *you* are that man. (*There is a second's stillness*) As a matter of fact, she told me this some time ago, and suggested that I write you, — or allow her to do so; but, as I say, the whole thing seemed so vague and incredible to me, that I didn't think it quite fair to annoy you with it. But, when she told me you were coming back, I thought at least it wouldn't do any harm to ask you to come out. And Professor Loebell here to-day seemed to think that that was really the only thing that could be done.

TRAIN (*with sympathetic interest*)

In what way does he suggest that I can be of assistance, Mr. Lyle?

[*Mr. Lyle smiles rather pathetically, and makes a slow, helpless little gesture with his right hand, — expressive of his inability to explain.*]

MR. LYLE

In the way of — mental stimulation, I think.

TRAIN

I see.

MR. LYLE

At least, that is what I gathered from the way he talked. He says that that is what he has been obliged to do in other cases of the kind, and the results have usually justified it. — But, — for some reason or other, Mr.

Train, — at least, so Mrs. Ridgway tells me, — my daughter has the impression that you don't *want* to meet her — that you didn't like her when you met her here last summer.

TRAIN

I'm very sorry that she should feel that way, I'm sure.

MR. LYLE

Of course, I know nothing whatever about it; I'm simply repeating what Mrs. Ridgway tells me. My daughter herself has never even mentioned your name to me.

TRAIN

I scarcely *know* your daughter, Mr. Lyle.

MR. LYLE

I appreciate that perfectly.

TRAIN

I don't think I've met her a half a dozen times altogether.

MR. LYLE

Well, of course, it may be simply an idea on her part. But, at the same time, Mr. Train, I want to be quite *fair* — to *you*. That is, I mean to say, — as she is my only child, — as you know, — it's quite possible that, — in my extremity, — I may be asking an interest on your part that may not be entirely agreeable to you.

TRAIN

Well, I think it's the very least I might do, under the circumstances.

MR. LYLE

Well, I daresay most people would feel the same way about it. But, after all, considering that she *is* so interested in you, it's quite conceivable that your attention might create a situation — later on, I mean —

that might be rather uncomfortable for you — that is, if her impression of your attitude toward her has any foundation. (*Train looks at him*) I know that I am placing you in a very difficult position, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

Yes, it *is* a difficult position.

MR. LYLE (*rising*)

Very difficult indeed. But then, I think you appreciate the difficulty of the whole situation.

[*He crosses in front of Train and moves down towards the right.*]

TRAIN

Yes, I do, Mr. Lyle.

MR. LYLE

It's rather an extraordinary state of affairs.

TRAIN

I'm afraid it invests me with an importance that I don't think I quite warrant.

MR. LYLE (*turning to him*)

Well, at least you have your right of choice.

TRAIN

Yes, of course.

MR. LYLE (*moving towards the back*)

There's no reason why you should be victimized by the infatuation of a girl who is a comparative stranger to you. (*He stops and looks out the window*) That's the reason, as I say, I want to be quite fair to you. (*Turning to him*) And I want you to be fair to yourself, too. After all, you haven't been consciously instrumental in creating these circumstances, so that I shouldn't like to feel that you were allowing yourself to be at all influenced by them — (*he moves away, down towards the*

right) from the standpoint of chivalry, or sentimentality, I mean. (*There is a pause; and Train shifts his position*) But, naturally, I have wondered just how correct my daughter was in her impression of your attitude toward her; (*Train moves as though to speak*) because I think a knowledge of that would simplify matters considerably for everybody.

TRAIN

I don't know that I was conscious of any really definite attitude at all towards her.

MR. LYLE

Well, you appreciate my reason for asking you, I'm sure.

TRAIN

Yes, certainly.

MR. LYLE

Her position has very naturally subjected her to the attentions of a great many men whose interest was easily explained; —

TRAIN

Of course.

MR. LYLE

And in thinking the matter over, it occurred to me that you might possibly have *assumed* an attitude, (*Train smiles faintly and moves his head slowly from side to side*) for fear of classification with those other men.

TRAIN

No, that thought didn't occur to me.

MR. LYLE

There's no reason why it should, of course.

TRAIN

If I had been interested, I shouldn't have allowed considerations of her position to influence me in the least.

MR. LYLE

Certainly not, Mr. Train; but the possibility occurred to me. And, frankly, I had hoped that that might be the case. Because, naturally, your position would certainly spare you any such classification, (*he moves up at the right and crosses above the table*) as far as I am concerned, at least.

TRAIN

That's very kind of you.

MR. LYLE (*coming forward at the left of the table*)

Not at all; I think you should *know* that, quite apart from any other consideration.

TRAIN (*feeling for his words*)

But your daughter and I have been derived from such very different settings, Mr. Lyle, that I'm afraid nothing very satisfactory could come of an interest in each other. [*He looks at Mr. Lyle; and Mr. Lyle holds his eye for a second and smiles.*]

MR. LYLE

You mean that you wouldn't care to *allow* yourself to become interested?

TRAIN

It would involve a risk — that I shouldn't care to take — unnecessarily.

MR. LYLE

In what way, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

Our points of view are too dissimilar — particularly, our points of view in the matter of any ultimate relationship.

MR. LYLE

Do you feel that you know my daughter well enough to be sure of that?

TRAIN

I've heard something of an expression of her views on the subject.

MR. LYLE

On the subject of marriage, you mean?

TRAIN (*with a shade of apology*)

Yes. And I'm afraid we were very far from agreement. I think probably that may have been the reason she thought I didn't like her; she may have sensed something of that lack of agreement.

MR. LYLE

But, don't you think, Mr. Train, that many of these young people simply wish to give an impression of extreme sophistication?

TRAIN

I have no doubt that that is so, in a great many instances; but you'll pardon me, Mr. Lyle, if I say that I do *not* think it applies in the present one.

[*Mr. Lyle tilts his head, and looks at him curiously.*]

MR. LYLE

Why not, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

Because I think the kind of life that girls in your daughter's set are permitted to live rather tends to make that sophistication very real.

MR. LYLE

Do you mind telling me, Mr. Train, whether or not you have reason to believe that it is real in my daughter's case, particularly?

[*Train holds his eye for a second, then leans back slowly in his chair.*]

TRAIN

You said a moment ago that you'd be very frank with me.

MR. LYLE

I hope I am being so.

TRAIN

Then, I'm surprised that you should ask me that question.

MR. LYLE

I'm afraid I don't quite follow you, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

I have lived in this city ten years, Mr. Lyle; — your daughter's name is very familiar to me.

MR. LYLE

By way of newspaper gossip, you mean?

TRAIN

Partly.

MR. LYLE

But, do you think that's quite fair?

TRAIN

How do you mean?

MR. LYLE

I mean, considering that a girl in my daughter's position would necessarily be subjected to a great deal of unfounded gossip.

[There is a pause.]

TRAIN (*carefully*)

It's the *nature* of the gossip — that I am concerned with chiefly, Mr. Lyle; and whether it's founded or unfounded, it implies an idea of — personal liberty — that I should be rather fearful about including in my — private life. (*Mr. Lyle looks at him steadily for a second,*

then slowly opens his hands in a gesture of surrender: turns away, and moves slowly down to the left) It may be that I'm considering myself too much in the matter.

MR. LYLE

Not at all, — why shouldn't you? You have your cause.

TRAIN

But, that cause may be less important at the moment than yours.

MR. LYLE

Well, at least you've expressed your willingness to be of what assistance you can for the present.

TRAIN

I am *more* than willing.

MR. LYLE

That's very generous of you.

TRAIN

But, as I say, I scarcely *know* your daughter — I didn't flatter myself that she even remembered me.

MR. LYLE (*turning to him*)

Yes, she seems to have remembered you very well, Mr. Train. I think you must have come into her life at a particularly psychological time. I've heard her say several times during the past weeks that life had played out with her. And I blame myself very largely for that, Mr. Train; she's probably been allowed to live too intensively; and it's exhausted her life interest. (*Turning towards the back of the room*) It's a great mistake; for it leaves them absolutely nothing in the way of resource, when they are confronted with something like this — something that *we* cannot *buy* for them. (*He*

shakes his head ruefully) Life has a strange way, Mr. Train, of stepping in and punishing us for our idolatries — We through them, and they through us; and so it goes — (*He comes forward slowly. One of the doors at the back opens noiselessly, and the wraith of Miss Lyle, in a pale velvet negligee, leans helplessly against the door jamb. She has the little book in her hand that she was reading the day she met Train*) — on out and around the world I suppose, — until the balance is adjusted.

[*He looks out and away off. And there is a physical stillness; during which Miss Lyle looks wistfully at Train.*

MISS LYLE

How do you do, Mr. Train?

[*Mr. Lyle turns suddenly, and Train rises, and looks in the direction of the door.*

MR. LYLE (*rushing to his daughter, aghast*)

Antoinette!

TRAIN (*crossing a little towards the left*)

How do you do, Miss Lyle?

MR. LYLE

My God, Antoinette, how did you get down here!

[*He helps her forward at the right of the table.*

MISS LYLE (*weakly*)

I took advantage of the nurse's absence from the room for a moment.

MR. LYLE

And did you come down the stairs alone, dear?

MISS LYLE

Why not?

MR. LYLE

My dear child, you shouldn't have done that.

MISS LYLE

I have developed the strength and cunning of the invalid.

MR. LYLE (*arranging the chair that Train has been sitting in*)

Sit down here, dear.

MISS LYLE

And I wanted to see Mr. Train.

[*She extends her hand to him.*]

TRAIN (*crossing and taking her hand*)

And I wanted to see you too, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

How are you, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

I'm very well, thank you, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

It seems an age since I saw you.

TRAIN

It has been quite a while.

[*She shakes her head slowly from side to side, and her father guides her into the chair.*]

MISS LYLE (*sinking into the chair*)

Ages.

MR. LYLE (*stepping to the sofa at the right for a pillow*)

Mr. Train has just come back from Mexico, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE (*breathlessly*)

Yes, I've been waiting for the middle of September; Eleanor told me that's when you'd be back.

TRAIN

She was telling me last night when I got in about your not feeling well, so when she said she was coming out here to-day I asked her if I might come out too.

MISS LYLE

I suppose Eleanor has told you many things.

TRAIN

She told me about your being ill.

MISS LYLE

And what has my father been telling you here?

MR. LYLE (*arranging the pillow behind her*)

I've been telling Mr. Train about the same thing, Antoinette.

MISS LYLE

How subtle you are all becoming.

MR. LYLE

What do you mean, darling?

MISS LYLE

I told you that I had developed the cunning of the invalid — that's why I've been watching the gate all day; and when I saw Eleanor's motor, I knew Mr. Train was with her. But it's a lost cause, I'm afraid —

MR. LYLE (*stroking her brow*)

You mustn't say that, my dear.

MISS LYLE

Yes; the bridegroom has tarried too long — in Mexico — even if he were interested, — which I'm sure he isn't.

TRAIN

I wish I could make you understand how interested I am, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

That's very chivalrous of you, Mr. Train, but how could you be? It would be against the logic of things. And that is one appreciation I have developed in these last few months.

[*She shakes her head wisely.*]

MR. LYLE

What, Tony dear?

[She looks away off.]

MISS LYLE

The stark beauty of the fact. I haven't an illusion left, — even about myself. And what is there after that? — For one only comes to that, I suppose, by way of one heartbreak or another.

[Lyle looks at Train helplessly.]

MR. LYLE

Did you and Professor Loebell have a talk, Antoinette?

MISS LYLE

Yes, we talked a little.

MR. LYLE

I thought it might be well to have his opinion.

MISS LYLE

He'll do his best, I suppose, according to his light. But it needs a stronger light than his, I'm afraid, for my case. Did he talk to you, Mr. Train?

TRAIN

No, he didn't, Miss Lyle; we came while he was talking to your father.

MISS LYLE

Well, he couldn't tell you as much as I can tell you, even if he *had* talked to you. That's why I came downstairs: I wanted to talk to you. So please sit down, Mr. Train —

TRAIN (*turning towards the chair at the left of the table*)

Certainly.

MISS LYLE

It tires me to see you standing there. (*Instead of sitting in the chair, Train reaches and picks up a small, fancy*

stool which is a bit over toward the left, and brings it quite close to Miss Lyle, and sits down on it, facing her) And I'm going to ask you, Father, to let me talk to Mr. Train alone; I have a few things I want to tell him.

MR. LYLE

You mustn't tire yourself out, my dear.

MISS LYLE

I won't. And I wish you'd tell the nurse where I am; she probably thinks I've fallen out the window.

MR. LYLE

Will I have her bring you another pillow?

MISS LYLE

No, tell her not to disturb me till I send for her.

MR. LYLE

Well, now, don't tire yourself, Tony.

[He kisses her hair tenderly, straightens up, and, allowing his eyes to rest for a moment on Train, moves slowly towards the back of the room.]

MISS LYLE

I'm quite as comfortable here as I would be in my room. *(Her eyes look searchingly at the floor; and Train watches Lyle, who opens the door quietly and goes out. As the door closes after him, Miss Lyle moves, with something of an effort, and looks keenly toward the door: then she settles back in the chair and looks at Train)* I hope they haven't been appealing to your chivalry here.

TRAIN

No, they haven't been, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

It occurred to me that they might be; and I didn't know how sentimental you were. I didn't want this affair to be made to appear in any way a tragedy of yours.

TRAIN

It's quite tragedy enough for me, Miss Lyle, to see you so ill.

MISS LYLE

I'm sorry if it depresses you. But I'm really not so ill as I am — life-wearied. And no wonder, after all the madness of the past ten years. It exhausts me even to think of it. For it seemed that the days weren't long enough for all the frenzy that I wanted to crowd into them. And there was nobody to restrain me. And this is the result.

TRAIN

I don't think you should blame yourself entirely for the result.

MISS LYLE

I don't, entirely —

TRAIN

Considering what you say, I mean.

MISS LYLE

No, — up to a certain point, I daresay I was the victim of circumstances. But, after that I knew better. I've known better for several years. And yet it was during those years that I was particularly unrestrained. The recklessness of despair, probably. For something in my nature *told me* that I had blundered fatally; and that some day I would realize it. And I did. I realized it — the day I met *you*, Mr. Train. You seemed to symbolize something for me that in my madness I'd lost sight of. It was very curious. And as I've thought it over during these past few months, I've concluded that *you* were the first man that ever appealed to the maternal in me. For as I watched you that first day, — you were a

strange mingling of the man and the little boy. One moment I saw only the man,—who attracted me; and immediately I decided upon my usual campaign—that had been so successful with many a man before you—And then I'd see the little boy. And it suggested what a little boy of yours might look like. And that *did* something to me—A kind of casting out of the seven devils, I suppose. For at that point I decided to withdraw—in favor of a woman who could go to you—as a woman *should* go to her husband. I said to myself, "This man deserves a better fate. And that—little boy of his—deserves a better mother." (*Train reaches slowly and takes one of her hands; and bows his head*) You see, I can be very impersonal with you, Mr. Train; for, as I told you, I knew from the first,—that my cause was lost.

TRAIN

You make me feel very unworthy, Miss Lyle.

MISS LYLE

But you're not, I'm sure. And I realize that my telling you these things imposes upon you something of a rather solemn responsibility. For, after all, it may be that *I* am more or less the victim of the idealism with which I have invested *you*: so you must maintain my cause.

[*Train raises his head and looks into her eyes.*]

TRAIN

I think I could maintain it better with your honesty to help me.

MISS LYLE (*with a regretful smile*)

Too late for that, my dear Mr. Train. Besides, it wouldn't be just. My lamp was not trimmed and

burning when the cry was raised; and so I mustn't whine — if I am not permitted to go in — to the marriage supper.

TRAIN

What can I say to you, my dear girl ——

MISS LYLE

There's nothing to be said; and you mustn't reproach yourself. You couldn't be expected to know that I was capable of this; I didn't know it myself. And by the time I *did* know it, — it was too late. And, after all, perhaps it's unimportant.

TRAIN (*rising*)

I'm afraid it'll be very important to me.

[He moves towards the right.]

MISS LYLE

No, I told you that this must not be in any way a tragedy for you.

TRAIN (*looking toward the back of the room*)

I've had my part in it.

[He moves up to the window and stands looking out, away off.]

MISS LYLE

The better part it was, though, Mr. Train, — remember that. And as for me, — (*she fixes her eyes beyond time*) I've grown so old these past few months, — that already I find myself looking back on this, — as though it happened to some other girl — I knew when I was young. (*There is a silence, during which Train moves slowly across towards the left, above the table*) But, I'm indebted to you for a new experience, Mr. Train.

TRAIN

What is that, Miss Lyle?

MISS LYLE

You've made me sentimental.

TRAIN (*moving forward at the left of the table*)

Have I?

MISS LYLE

Yes. — I've had an unconquerable desire, these past few weeks, to see you once again — exactly as I saw you that first day I met you — when I said you looked like a bridegroom.

TRAIN

Yes, I remember.

MISS LYLE

You had a dark coat on; and a white rose — that Eleanor had given you down in the garden.

TRAIN

This is the coat.

MISS LYLE (*smiling wanly*)

And I have the rose.

TRAIN

Have you, really?

MISS LYLE (*opening the little book in her hand*)

Yes, you remember you pressed it for me in this book here.

TRAIN (*reaching for the book*)

Oh, yes, I remember.

MISS LYLE

I brought it down with me.

TRAIN (*lifting the pressed flower carefully out of the book*)

It's kept very well, hasn't it?

MISS LYLE

You see how sentimental I've become. (*Train tries to smile, and puts the book down on the table*) But a friend

of mine told me that if I were to see you again, I should be disillusioned — that you'd suffer from — familiarity. And while I don't want to be disillusioned, as far as *you* are concerned, — my love of *the fact* — is even greater than my fear of that disillusionment. So I'm going to ask you to put that rose in your coat again.

TRAIN

I'm afraid I can't, Miss Lyle; it'll break.

MISS LYLE

Then, just *hold* it — against your coat. I want to see if you really *are* the bridegroom I remember; for I feel somewhat better prepared to meet him now.

[Train lifts the flower slowly to his lapel, and looks at her tenderly. She beholds the bridegroom again; and, raising her hand haltingly, in a gesture of unbearable sorrow, droops heavily across the arm of the chair, weeping bitterly. Train puts the rose on to the table and steps to her side, kneeling on one knee.]

TRAIN

Miss Lyle — you mustn't cry. — Miss Lyle, you mustn't cry that way. *(She gradually stops, from weakness)* Antoinette — *(she hears him say her name; then raises herself slowly and looks at him. He takes her in his arms)* don't cry.

[She weakly lifts her right hand and smooths his hair.]

MISS LYLE *(sinking slowly back into the chair)*

My Beloved.

[He looks at her keenly.]

TRAIN *(quietly, but with a note of alarm)*

Antoinette — *(He rises suddenly, thinks, then steps quickly to the push button at the back of the room. He presses it, and then hastily opens the door. There is a*

glimpse of a trained nurse talking to Sheppard in the hallway) Nurse, would you come here for a moment, please? *(He comes forward again at the right, to a point below the chair in which Miss Lyle is sitting, and the nurse follows him in, hurrying to the upper side of the chair)* Miss Lyle has fainted, I think. *(The nurse glances at Miss Lyle, then takes her pulse. Train stands watching her anxiously. Gradually, her eyes narrow, and suddenly she looks straight at Train)* Do you think I'd better carry her upstairs?

NURSE

I think so, yes, if you will, please. *(She helps him to lift her up)* She shouldn't have come down at all. *(Edwards enters hurriedly, coming forward at the left of the table, to see if he can be of any assistance. The nurse starts for the door)* Will you call her father, please?

EDWARDS *(hurrying out)*

Certainly.

[He goes towards the left.]

NURSE

Just follow me, please, we'll take her right up to her room.

[She goes out, to the right, followed by Train, carrying Miss Lyle. Then there is a vacant pause. Then Lyle hurries along the hallway; and, after a second, Edwards follows him. After a moment Mrs. Ridgway stops in the doorway and looks anxiously after the men. Then she comes into the room and forward at the right, looking about nervously. Sheppard hurries across the doorway.]

MRS. RIDGWAY

What happened, Sheppard?

[Sheppard turns into the room.]

SHEPPARD

Why, Miss Lyle fainted in here, I think, Mrs. Ridgway ;
Mr. Train just carried her upstairs.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Is the nurse with her ?

SHEPPARD

Yes, Ma'am, she was down here when she fainted. She
was talking to me outside the door there when Mr. Train
called her.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I think you'd better call the night nurse, Sheppard ; they
may need her.

SHEPPARD

She didn't go to bed at all to-day, Mrs. Ridgway.

MRS. RIDGWAY

Oh, didn't she ?

SHEPPARD

No, Ma'am, she told me Miss Lyle was bad all
morning.

*[Train is standing in the doorway, between them, — his
face stern with tragedy.]*

MRS. RIDGWAY

Is Antoinette all right, Spencer ?

[He turns his eyes and looks at her ; then moves forward.]

TRAIN *(tonelessly)*

Not yet.

*[He comes down at the left of the table, to the back of the
chair, and Mrs. Ridgway moves forward at the right of the
table, looking at him. Sheppard glides noiselessly out and
closes the doors quietly.]*

MRS. RIDGWAY

Is her father up there ?

TRAIN

He's just gone up now.

MRS. RIDGWAY

How did she get down here, Spencer?

TRAIN

She said she walked down.

MRS. RIDGWAY

By herself?

TRAIN

So she said. She came in while her father was talking to me.

MRS. RIDGWAY

I was looking at a book out there in the lounge, and I suddenly *felt* that something had happened. I thought that you and Uncle Robert were still in here.

TRAIN (*slowly picking up the rose and the book from the table*)

She said she wanted to talk to me alone for a few minutes.

MRS. RIDGWAY

What did she want to say to you, Spencer, —

TRAIN (*mournfully, and moving a few steps farther forward, to the left*)

Oh, —

MRS. RIDGWAY

Was it anything important?

TRAIN

She said a great many things to me, Eleanor. — She said she wasn't *ready* when the *bridegroom* came. (*Mrs. Ridgway turns away slowly and moves across to the sofa at the right, where, covering her face with her hand, she sits down and weeps softly to herself. Train looks out and away off*) I'm wondering if I was ready, Eleanor.

MRS. RIDGWAY

But you *were* the bridegroom, Spencer.

[Train shakes his head slowly from side to side.]

TRAIN

No, I think perhaps the bridegroom, Eleanor, is the kind of thing that she had to give; and I think if I'd been ready, I might have recognized it sooner than I did. — And it may not *come* my way again.

[The curtain commences to descend very slowly. He looks at the rose, then reverently places it in the book.]

[illegible]

#47-0108 Peel Off Pressure Sensitive

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PS 3521 .E425 B4 1928
Kelly, George, 1887-1974.
Behold, the bridegroom

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